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Howard
Garden of Eden

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The Garden of Eden

BY

BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD

AUTHOR OF "ONE SUMMER," "GUENN," "DIONYSIUS
THE WEAVER'S HEART'S DEAREST," ETC., ETC.



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PROLOGUE
IN THREE SCENES

PROLOGUE

IN THREE SCENES

I

Place : A Garden of Eden.

Persons : Adam, aged eleven: Eve, aged seven.

Serpent : deeming his office a sinecure in the councils of these children, absent.

The Tree of Knowledge : a small Bartlett pear tree bearing its first fruits, three perfect pears, caressed by the gardener with tender thumb and finger light as air and destined for my lady's breakfast on the morrow.

Time : Twilight, and a Sunday.

ADAM and Eve, having seen for weeks that the little tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, approached and hung about it tentatively.

"I'll just see if they are ripe," quoth Adam.

"So will I," said Eve, his devotee and echo. Adam pinched a pear.

Eve did likewise.

Adam squeezed a second pear.

Eve followed her leader.

Adam seized the third, and remarked with bland surprise:

"Why it's so dead ripe, it just dropped off of itself."

Eve knew better, but said nothing.

Adam did eat, devouring the pear noisily. It sounded juicy and luscious in little Eve's ears.

"I don't quite remember whether this one was altogether ripe," pursued the perfidious Adam. "Bless me, it has fallen off too!"

He plunged into it with liquid swoops and gurgles of delight.

"How good that sounds," sighed Eve.

"Here," decreed Adam magnificently, "you may have this one," plucked the third pear, and Eve did eat.

Hearing the gardener walking in the garden in the cool of the day, the guilty couple ran and hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden.

But the gardener in the twinkling of an eye perceived that his pet pears were gone, pounced upon Adam and Eve, dragged them forth from their ambush and before the High Tribunal of their aunt.

"How could you be so naughty and steal those beautiful pears, when you were allowed

to eat the fruit of every other tree in the garden?"

Now Adam did not mind such a little thing as a fib. Thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, he stoutly affirmed that he had never so much as seen the pears.

The High Tribunal turned to Eve, who quaked beneath her pinafore and gave a frightened sob.

"Child, is it possible that it was you?"

The doughty Adam expected Eve to fib easily in his footsteps and was cogitating whether he should now inculcate the robins, or a neighbor's boy against whom he had a grudge.

But, remarking her pitiful plight, and being a much better fellow than the reputed father of the race, hence incapable of meanly shuffling off blame upon a dear companion, and of desiring her to be punished with him, he suddenly cried with a swagger:

"I say, I lied you know. I ate your old pears, all three of them — skins, seeds, and stems."

The High Tribunal was very wroth with Adam and commanded he should be driven out of that delightful garden and enjoy no more the fruits thereof; and the grim gar-

dener was enjoined, henceforth like cherubim and a flaming sword turning every way, to guard fair Eden.

With a terrible countenance the reprobate Adam strode forth from the judgment-chamber, and wretched Eve, faithful as his shadow, trotted after him. But Adam was a person of resources.

"Cheer up, Chubby," he presently muttered, "you are all right, you know. Don't worry. Trust me to nab all the fruit I want." Here he put his thumb upon his nose and executed an antediluvian gesture. "Now come along, and see me drive spikes into her new gate."

But Eve took no pleasure in those nails of retribution. Adam's more athletic conscience skipped handsomely over the pear tree, hers was heavy and sore. In her own way, without dictionary-words, she knew that they had wantonly seized and devoured the property of others. Moreover, she had seen her affable seniors grouped around that tree while the old gardener smirked in his beard. She was vaguely aware those pears were precious things, possessed of ideal worth — that a trust had been betrayed, a hope destroyed. She was ashamed that she had remained meanly

silent. Had the High Tribunal been alone, Eve would have confessed her pear, but the many eyes of aunts confused her, and while she hesitated, Adam assumed the entire felony and sealed her lips.

In short, little Eve — let theologians and philosophers explain why — writhed under the ugly weight of sin, felt acute attacks of self-reproach and long enduring discomfort. For years she could not pass that tree without a pang. Like ever-accusing fingers its twigs pointed at her. The largely hospitable and betrayed aunt seemed no longer as other aunts. In her presence Eve was ill at ease. When pears confronted her at dessert, she stared guiltily at her plate. Sweet had been the forbidden fruit, bitter the after taste.

Thus the child Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But that scapegrace, Brother Adam, because he had the manliness to protect her, was henceforth, in her eyes, even more great and glorious.

II

A BISHOP in his robes stood catechizing a hundred children in a vestry. He was a stalwart man of ruddy countenance and unascetic lips, but a child in one of the younger classes watched him with unswerving gaze, for this was the Anointed of the Lord, and could do no wrong thing. Noting her eager eyes, he turned to her with a question which she answered. Because she was little and seemed alert and older children had mumbled, it pleased the great man to continue to question her and to lead her gradually into ecclesiastical fields beyond the limits assigned to those of her tender years. But being a child of facile memory, and rather liking the sound of long words she did not understand, and having heard reluctant brothers and cousins droning their catechism and older classes declaiming it in unison, it happened that she knew it all.

Her heart beating high, her dilated eyes fixed upon the Anointed of the Lord, her voice clear and confident, she rattled off bravely that portion of the twentieth chapter of Ex-

odus which exemplary persons consider indispensable milk for babes. This is because the Church had Fathers only — many of them, alas! old bachelors: the Church of the Future will have Mothers also, therefore more mercy and comprehension for its little ones.

She never stumbled on that long, rocky way from the house of bondage, down past the graven images, the jealous God, iniquity, adultery, and false witness, and arrived safely at her neighbor's ass. For the most part this austere wisdom was a sort of holy gibberish to the little maid, and the meaning of the few injunctions which her mind faintly grasped, she learned better and more sweetly at her mother's knee, without the intervention of Moses.

After the Commandments, she blithely chirped those trifles, her Duty toward God and her Duty toward her Neighbor, and finally piped with somewhat the comprehension of a canary bird, that she was born in sin and the child of wrath, and the many great words about the mystery of the Sacraments. For this mere trick of memory she received the public commendation of the Bishop, as if she had done some saintly deed.

Glowing with success and excitement, for there had been a certain risk in her prowess,

still more, strangely exalted because it was the Anointed of the Lord who had praised her, she passed out of the Church with her mates, and was as sure of their delight as of her own. But the little girls were silent.

"She is proud because she knows the second half, and we don't. Let us not walk with her." The entire flock flew across the street.

Turning neither to the right nor to the left, with head erect, flushed cheeks, and quivering lips, — bewildered, cut to the heart, her triumph and the Lord's Anointed already forgotten, the child walked on, beneath the shady maple trees of that quiet neighborhood, and heard the ostentatious mirth of the group advancing parallel with her, step for step, yet with more between her and them than the breadth of a summer street.

For, alienating those tender souls, in embryo was a troop of the ugliest phantoms that haunt mankind — envy, cruelty, discord, ostracism, the perfidy of friends, the fickleness of mobs — and their chill lovelessness the child felt with tumultuous, uncomprehended pain. And all else she could have borne, but while she walked in bitterness alone, her dearest walked with the others.

Thus the child knew loneliness.

III

A LITTLE girl used to slip away from her mates at the portals of a small Gothic church on Sunday noons, steal up alone to an empty gallery, hide with beating heart behind a stone pillar and wait, in strange suspense, while the kneeling grown people down below proceeded with their mumblings and genuflections, which interested her little, until she heard bursting forth gloriously:

Therefore with Angels and Archangels and all the company of Heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee and saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth—when the child behind the granite pillar would tremble, hold her breath, close her eyes, and feel her heart swell marvellously. She saw them all—the shining throng of angels and archangels sweeping along on white, slow wings and chanting their mystical “*Holy, Holy, Holy,*” until the voices below ceased suddenly with “*Most High,*” which always recalled her to earth with a shock.

Haunted by no seraphic visions, not spiritual, not dreamy, she would run home to her robust, boyish sports, her tempers and tyrannies, her story-books, unripe fruit and dogs. Yet never, if she could help it, did she miss floating with her angels and archangels. She always went alone to keep her tryst with them, and spoke of it to no one. Often she wondered anxiously if it were going to be the same. It always was the same. Always with those noble opening words came the little chill down her back, the slight choking in the throat, like tears; and at the *Tresagion*, the languor, the buoyancy, the spiritual detachment, the sense of rapturous flight, the whole rush of complex emotion for which she had no comprehension and no name—but which, whether a mysterious after-glow from some previous stage of being, or the equally mysterious prescience of a distant dawn, was an ecstasy of adoration almost too mighty for the heart of a child.

The Garden of Eden



I

THE hospitable old house on the height above the bay no longer blazed abroad from a phalanx of shining windows its signals of good cheer. All within was dim and hushed. Something gracious, warm, and infinitely kind had fled from it forever. In an upper room a frail old man kept watch by a rigid shape, and stared before him with unfaltering eyes — keen still and marvellously luminous in the wizened face — while his stout heart went brooding down the seventy years of his pilgrimage.

Without, the night was wet with dripping autumn mists and heavy with fumes of decaying leaves. Sad shapes of denuded elms haunted the long paths, and the rose garden was black and gloomy as the grave.

Stealthily, although on that dense, moist carpet of leaves, no footfall could sound — swiftly, ever swifter, with eager heart, a girl

came on from the direction of the house, ran across lawns, down avenue, alley, and by-path, vanished like a shade in the depths of the dead rose garden, reached the threshold of a roomy arbor, and stopped short. Parting with both hands its trailing veil of vine-stems, she stood peering into the chilly blackness.

"Dear?" she whispered, "Dear?"

Nothing responded save a shivering along the vines, stirred to brief life by a stray salt whiff from the bay. Yet whether unconsciously guided by one ill-repressed ardent breath, or by the faint aroma of cigarette-smoke, or by the subtle divination love lends the dullest, it was but an imperceptible instant before she sprang across the intervening distance, and with a tremulous sigh of relief, of attainment, of exceeding peace — found what she sought.

All else receded: disquieting problems, excess of work and care, burdens of anxiety, of pain and pity — the whole prolonged strain of months — even the solemn dominance of that still presence in "the chamber over the gate" sank from her like a garment, and her spirit, light, free, rapturous, seemed consciously to rise and to soar in illimitable space.

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But the man who loved her well, did not^{The} the moment float. He kept his feet well planted on the earth, remembered for her dear sake what she innocently forgot, and much as yet unknown to her — while all was still in the arbor save for the shivering along the vines.

When he, at length, spoke, she gave a little start — as if the congregation had reached "*Most High*."

"Did no one see you come?" he demanded brusquely.

"No —" she murmured, her voice languid and remote.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite," she returned, still absently, then with concern: "How cold you are, how very, very cold! Your hair, your cheek, your coat, all of you!"

"Will they not miss you?" he persisted nervously. "Are you sure no one saw or heard you leave the house? Did you shut the library door? Where do they think you are?"

"They think I am resting — which I am — in my room — where, happily, I am not. I closed the door; no one saw or heard me. Why are you so anxious, dearest?"

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‘You ought to know why I am anxious,’ he returned curtly. In the stillness and the dusk he suddenly drew her closer as if he faintly would ward off impending evil.

“Have you been waiting long?” she said softly, after a while. “Why did you not speak? How could you want me to lose time groping in the dark?”

“Groping!” he muttered.

She laughed low, in quick response, but broke off instantly. “I wonder that I can laugh the least fragment of a laugh — ever again!” she sighed.

“‘Ever again’ is rather a large order, is it not?” he said indulgently with an undertone of sadness. “If only the people with no heartaches in this best of all worlds should laugh!”

“But I am asking myself in these last days if I am not perhaps really heartless.”

“You? Very!” he retorted with a short laugh.

“Because nothing is as I expected it would be. I do not feel in the least as people expect me to feel or as I expected to feel myself!”

“Child! Who ever yet felt as he expected to feel!”

“But indeed I’m afraid there is something

abnormal in me. I cannot mourn right. The house seems unreal, like a stage, and I not particularly interested in the play. It is not merely that I am cold. I often have no feeling at all. Even my own voice sounds far away and hollow, and I walk about like a graven image."

"Over-excitement. Fatigue. Strained nerves. Want of sleep," he returned with professional curtness.

"Is that all?" she said wearily. "I began to fear I was a monster."

"Have you any other crimes to confess?" he asked, in tender irony. "If there's a shooting-fray in Texas, a train robbed in Dakota, an outbreak of Popocatpetl, or something rotten in the state of Denmark, you are usually I believe the guilty party." He meant her to smile but heard her sigh. As she remained silent in her soft nearness, he went on with his benevolent derision, a safeguard he deemed for her and for himself. "When a New England woman starts to go upstairs, she always asks herself whether it is her duty to begin with the right or the left foot, and what relation her step bears to the great laws of the universe? Terrible little Scholastics you all are!"

"Must she have suffered so long? Were we not cruel?"

"Why torment yourself so?"

"But Lilian herself was gone weeks ago. Was it right to let Pater watch his best beloved merge into — *that*, before his eyes? Into something hardly human, yet dying slowly in unutterable pain? Oh, Keith, if you could have helped her!"

"Ah," he replied gravely, "we doctors are not so far along as that. It is our duty to seek to preserve life — at any cost."

"Oh, it has been unspeakable agony to see that pure spirit vanish — slowly — gruesomely — instead of adjusting the morphine so finely that she was sure to awaken to renewed torment, how often I longed to lovingly administer release! But though Lilian was gone, something of her remained: the silky hair, the large eloquent hands. It was too much for my strength. I had not the courage. Yet often I have thought some one ought to do it, for Lilian's sake, for Pater's sake: ought to have the courage and the right, after the soul is fled, to stop the poor wretched machine, that exists only to suffer and cause suffering."

He soothed her with tender voice, arms, and caress.

"Why think, why speak of it? Why excite yourself so? Some day we will discuss that question. Not to-night."

"Then she died," pursued Monica, "and I was quite calm. I watched her agony so often and so long, the mere passing away seemed very simple. I closed her eyes and was thankful I need never again torture her with that horrible morphine needle or with loathsome drugs, never again molest her in any way. And when I look at her, I do not grieve. Is that natural? Is it not — inhuman?"

He had watched her sharing her friend's burdens, bearing her friend's cross, taking her friend in loving arms and with unfaltering courage and service, descending, so far as lies in human power, every step of that long and ghastly journey into the silence that meant release. Now he heard her arraign herself for some imaginary flaw in her nature, some involuntary deviation from her traditions, while she leaned in blessed serenity on his breast and felt by night the arms enfold her which could never openly protect her by day. Her vast unconsciousness,—which, according to his mood, touched him as something puerile but dear, thrilled him with mighty exultation, turned him sick with self-reproach and forebod-

ing, could indeed even irritate him with its placid remoteness,—had never seemed to him more amazingly incomprehensible than at this moment. With a bitter sense of the incongruity of the situation, of her sweet unreasonableness, the utter futility of his great love, of the deadly irony of life, he broke out bitterly:

“Would to God you were heartless and knew your own worth, and could haggle and barter and sell yourself handsomely as prudent women do, instead of being so mad as to —”

“Keith, dear Keith!”

“You are right,” he said moodily, “tragics are useless and out of date. But there is something I’ve resolved to tell this night—quietly—quietly. Wait. There used to be some chairs in this place. I’ll prowl about a bit. Here’s a stack of spades—sharper than a serpent’s tooth. Don’t stumble over them.”

He tramped about with rather marked deliberation and announced from the other side of the arbor:

“The tide is coming in: just approaching the bridge I should say. Do you know, I don’t mind the smell of the mud flats when there’s a wind from the bay and an incoming

tide. But on an August noon and the tide well out and no breeze stirring, the stench of of those flats is an abomination."

"Yes, dear. What is it that you must tell me, quietly?"

"That you are to put yourself in this camp-chair — so — and your feet upon this box — so — and be covered up — so — like a mummy."

"Ah, Keith, not with your coat!"

"I'm all right. I'm going to move about a little. Besides I've not been up an incredible number of nights working and enduring beyond belief. Do you know, any woman with an atom of self-respect would take to her bed with a good orthodox rheumatism or a decent sort of fever — instead of frequenting damp arbors and disreputable society."

Docile to his wish, she closed her eyes, lay still, let him cover her feet and do what he would. Nor did she wonder at his irrelevant chatter, his sudden restlessness. It was frequently a way of his, and all his ways were dear. When his rich voice with its ironical indulgence, its suggestion of illimitable worldly experience, its strong beat of repressed emotion, deigned to talk arrant nonsense he charmed her senses and possessed her heart.

Folding his arms obstinately across his

breast, he leaned against the doorpost and asked: "How is Judge Trevor?"

"Perfectly calm. Exactly as I remember him all my life — except, perhaps, a trifle paler, sharper, more shrunken, more sardonic, more thoroughly Voltaire's twin brother: everything in him suddenly accentuated — yet if it is possible to conceive it, even more ceremonious, more courteous, more gentle and thoughtful of everybody, more utterly touching."

"Fine old fellow. Game."

"Yes. *Chevaleresque* to the last. Like some old marquis in St. Lazare among those splendid souls who knew so well how to die — Lilian too was like them —"

"Do you still give him the electricity every day?"

"Twice a day."

"It can do that withered arm no earthly good."

"No, dear, but he thinks it may."

"He pretends to think so, but he is over seventy years old, and supernaturally shrewd. He has no illusions."

"It diverts him at least. When the apparatus begins to sing, and I roll up his sleeve on that poor little bone, and look as wise as an

owl, — professionally solemn — a trick I've caught from you, dear! — he is always cheerful, and it occupies him two whole hours every one of his sad long days."

He made a sudden dive toward her, nearly reached her with outstretched arms in the dark, checked himself and continued his measured tread.

"Do you know, you are an uncommonly good little girl? I may have forgotten to mention it. And what are our esteemed relatives doing meanwhile?"

"Dividing," she answered gently, "always dividing. Making inventories. Ransacking. Feeling silk between thumb and finger. Holding lace well up to the light."

"Vulturesque!"

"This morning as I was doing Pater's arm, was absorbed in my work and everything was quite still except for the buzz of the machine, he suddenly gleamed at me with that most wicked little smile of his and asked, in a sort of stage whisper:

"'Have they got to the ragbag yet?' It really startled me, as he never appears to notice anything, but I was relieved to see the wicked little smile again, it looked so familiar and dear."

Keith continued his obtrusive calm pacing, whistling a street melody between his teeth, and the pause grew long before she demanded suddenly:

"Why were you silent when I came to-night? Did you want me to go away? And what do you want to tell me — quietly? For I feel it between us — whatever we try to say."

In an instant he was near her.

"Why did you not speak?" she whispered, clinging close.

"Because, if you must know, I was afraid," he said, huskily. "I heard you, saw you, every step as if it were noonday, coming toward me in the night. It is glorious the way you come, but it is sheer madness. I was afraid of you — afraid for you. — God knows I am afraid unceasingly" — and he bowed his head over her.

"But when I assure you we are as safe as if this were a desert island —"

He laughed sadly.

"My poor little deluded girl."

"Even if a servant should happen to see me go in, I should not mind at all."

"Oh, no, you would not mind."

"I simply should have been taking the air

in the garden and that I have done at any hour I chose all the year."

"You simply would have been taking the midnight air," he repeated gravely.

"When Lilian's bell used to ring out so late, they could hardly have thought me alone?"

"There was no secrecy about it?"

"None whatever. After all," she said, rather haughtily, "Judge Trevor and mamma are the only persons to whom I owe any explanation of my conduct. All that I do I tell her, and he would not object; in fact he probably suspects at this moment that I am with you."

He laughed again incredulously, hopelessly. "Because you wind them all round your fingers, toss their principles and traditions to the winds, and sweetly persuade them black is white, does that alter facts? You are dangerous, my Monica! In the first place, all your geese are swans. I never met a woman whose geese were such transcendental fowls of purest Lohengrin breed. Then your convictions are so strong, your faith is so ardent—the veritable faith that moves mountains—to my knowledge, you have set several big mountains nodding and swaying, not to speak of all the little hills that are continually hopping and

skipping and dancing jigs to your pipe. You fairly hypnotize us. It is incredible. You completely won that good woman — your poor friend up there — and she was not revolutionary like you, my dear — ”

“Lilian understood you, Keith,” murmured the girl.

“And Judge Trevor, most punctilious of men — until, if they did not actually connive at our meetings, at least they tacitly permitted them.”

“I merely told them the truth. I could do no less. They were my best friends. I was under their roof. But I said exceedingly little. They saw for themselves what you were.”

“And your mother. She is infinitely distressed, poor soul, always in purgatory, — yet there are moments when you half-hypnotize even her.”

“She cannot help loving you,” exclaimed the girl.

“And demure Cousin Ruth, horrified at any irregularity in manners or morals, what did you do to her that she walked three miles with you and waited patiently that we might have a couple of hours together undisturbed?”

“How wonderful it was that day!” she sighed wistfully. “The rocks, the surf, the

dipping white sails, the sea gulls whirling, and we two quite alone ! ”

For a moment he could not speak. She was sometimes disheartening.

He kissed her hands slowly and resumed : “ And the old Trevor servants. They would bite out their tongues or steal for you. The dogs — the dogs adore you. They obey your very whisper — which is uncommonly lucky for you and me,” he added grimly. “ And I — I,” he laughed bitterly, “ I the great Lohengrin swan ! Almost you persuade me I am a right sort of lover for you. Sometimes, indeed, I am led to believe we wear guileless coral beads and white smocks, and are making daisy chains in the meadow.”

“ Are you blaming me, Keith ? ” she asked, perplexed.

“ God forbid ! For what, then, Monica ? For being your own fine, fearless self ? For thinking no evil ? For loving purely and not counting costs ? For being magnanimous to a poor beggar ? For — ” he pulled himself up sharply and veered off into the first byway that presented itself : “ Such a clever little girl too ! Writes books — ”

“ Not books. A book. Hardly large enough to toddle alone. Besides, you do not like it.”

"No," he admitted reluctantly, "I don't."

"Why do you not like it, Keith? You have never told me, you know. I rather wish you could like it, of course. Still I really do not mind much."

He hesitated.

"I suppose it is because I in general don't like your merry art; what they call humor and all that."

"It is light — as thistle-down," she returned simply. "But it has a merry way of selling, as I hear to-day from my publishers. I hope you do not scorn that."

"By no means. I like Mammon uncommonly well."

"You know I have hardly thought of it. I have had better and sadder things to think of than that idle little tale. But it is strange that it should be liked for its lightness, while all this is happening to us; Lilian dying by inches, and you and I —"

"Toying with thunderbolts! Oh, Monica, let us not talk of dipping white sails or little popular books. Lie still, dear, and let me say what is on my heart. Every time I approach it, I turn and run. But speak I must — You — you —" he went on, "you see it all in a great glory. It is all ideal to you, poor

little girl. But I cannot pretend unconsciousness. My soul is not a blank white page like yours, and it is downhill we are going—straight to perdition.”

“If it is as bad as that,” she replied, in a clear voice and springing up quickly, “let us sit here quietly on this bench, side by side, and see what is to be done. Tell me what you mean, Keith. Why are we going to perdition? I don’t believe you. We love each other, surely there must be help.”

“Because we love each other there is no help,” he answered with a kind of sternness. “Because it grows harder for me each day—how hard, how immeasurably beyond my strength you will never comprehend. At first I too was in a fool’s paradise. But it is two years now—two years. It is so natural, you say, in your delicious but most imperfect wisdom. So perilously natural, my Monica, for us to be together. You are all I want in this or any other world. In all I have sought, all I have seemed to love since the boy’s heart in me first stirred and waked and longed for something higher and better than itself, I was seeking and loving only you. I was born to love you. When I found you I knew that I had always loved you. You were waiting

for me, dear — and I — fool — I had not waited.”

“Keith,” she pleaded, but he went on in stern self-reproach:

“That was a crime, but not my worst against you. I need not have let you love me.”

“Ah, that you could not help!”

“I ought to have slunk out of your path. I need not have yielded to my longing to be near you, need not have let the fine meshes close round us closer, finer, every hour. I ought to have loved you from afar, as I did, indeed, a whole year, before I met you face to face. I might have met you any day, and I never took one step toward knowing you. That is the one straight thing I have done. I knew it must come as it has come, if we two should meet. And I avoided you. I was afraid, even then. I hid in doorways and round corners and held my breath and watched you go by — away from me — always away from me! Once in the twilight you came along swiftly with an armful of tall lilies and behind you was a dull gold sky. You’ll never know how you looked, never! I followed you like a thief — like the thief that I am!”

“Dearest, if you would not be so wretched! You are good and you are strong. We have

done nothing wrong. I have met you when and where I could. If there be wrong in our meeting I am as much to blame as you. But I will not have you so miserable on my account—I will not. I am trying to think. Go on.”

“Can you not understand?” he said with a strange sort of irritation; “it is the harm overshadowing your white life that makes me miserable—the transparent life that all the world might know until I came.”

“It is a better and larger life through you, and so far as I alone am concerned the whole world may know it still.”

“Oh, my great-hearted, foolish, foolish Monica. You make it terribly hard for me to save you!” he muttered. “But surely you realize the world would cast you out for this one clandestine rendezvous.”

“Then the world is wrong, not we,” she declared serenely. “It cannot be a sin to love what is lovable wherever one finds it. Clandestine? ‘It is not a nice word. But words are not very important, are they? I do not feel clandestine. Only alone with you—my other self—in the open air where I’d always rather be than under any roof. And harm? Harm,” she repeated slowly, “what harm could come to me through you?”

"Hear her, hear her!" he cried desperately. "Love, listen to me now and trust me. I'm not much older than you, but miles older in iniquity, and I understand you better than you understand yourself, and, God help me, I know pretty well what sort of fellow I am. Can you doubt that were there the smallest chance of happiness for us in flight I should have proposed it long ago? I know places full of sunshine where we could live for a song. Oh, how I've dreamed it sleeping and waking! We'd go to Venice, to Algiers — we'd wander through the far east, and to wonderful islands, and you'd love it. You are such a staunch comrade, so light of heart, so undismayed. You'd go, would you not, Monica," he demanded suddenly with fierce eagerness; "say, you would go to the ends of the earth with the scoundrel I should then be — a good bit more scoundrel, let me tell you, than I ever was yet! But you'd go?"

"No, Keith," she answered simply and sorrowfully; "it would break my mother's heart, and you — could — never desert."

He was silent long, breathed heavily, struggling to recover his clear aim, blurred now by the alluring vision conjured up by his own involuntary ardor.

"That is it," he said at last, wearily. "Of course I knew you would answer so. You see, we were meant to be honest, you and I, dear."

"We are honest, Keith."

"Under palms and bluest skies, you could never forget your mother's broken heart, and I should never cease to remember that I'd lost the last shred of honor I once possessed, and we two should be trailing about with us everywhere our miserable bedraggled New England consciences. More than another man," he was speaking with broken most reluctant speech—close in her ear, "am I bound to bear the consequences of my own acts. Nothing that I ever did would be so vile as to break the chains I once forged for myself—"

"I know. I know—" she murmured warmly. "Why speak? Why tell me that?"

"Partly for your dear sake. Partly for myself. Because sometimes I have wild thoughts," he answered low, "and I am weak—and sorely tempted, and—and then"—his voice attempted to strike the familiar jesting note—"it is wise to establish the fact that there is nothing at all tragic about us two. Absurd on the face of it! My whole-some sensible Monica trying to be a tragic

figure! You were meant for something quite different," he bowed his head yearningly over her, "quite different, dear," he repeated and kissed her upon the forehead—a kiss of brave renunciation of which she knew not the worth.

After a while he resumed, with a fair amount of animation:

"But after we note the things which as you say are out of the question, perhaps we can judge more clearly what remains. This whole year you have been wonderfully protected by your friend's illness. It has granted me a legitimate pretext for seeing you every day."

"It was always so short! Dr. Irwin so appallingly punctual. Every day, the same report only steadily sadder, more dreary. I trying to look at him—and seeing only you, so tall—with the grave eyes of a stranger—and taking my orders like a soldier—"

"Like a sound straight sort of soldier. The one who in spite of all their servants and nurses has borne the brunt of the battle. But consider, dear," he pursued patiently, "all this dreariness has saved appearances, and you have been guarded by your lifelong devotion to Lilian Trevor, by Judge Trevor's garden, Judge Trevor's stately self, in short Judge

Trevor's ægis — incredible as it is — and we have met safely, in every respect, so far, heaven knows how — for any moment the chances, all the chances, my Monica, might have turned against you."

"We have met very rarely," she said regretfully.

"Not yet too often, dear, thank heaven!" he retorted doggedly. "Now you return to town and your mother, and this is what I must ask you squarely: How do you picture the future?"

"Why, like the past," she replied faintly, for he was beginning to shake her easy serenity, "meeting you now and then, — writing to you every day — loving you as I may from afar, since it is not granted me to love you near — living on the remembrance of the last brief meeting, — comforted by the hope of the next —"

"And always, without peace or rest, always in peril, compromised inevitably sooner or later! You whose very shoe buttons are matters of interest to the community — no — no!" — he groaned.

"Not meet? Never? You and I?" she cried aghast. "In the same town and not meet? Why that would be impossible. We

might not plan it, we might even seek to avoid each other. But we should be all the time drawing nearer, nearer, though against our will, and suddenly, in the woods or on the beach, there we should be, heart to heart!"

"Don't, love," he groaned. "I cannot bear it. What you say is true. We cannot live in the same town and not meet. We cannot live in the same town and meet. I see no rescue for you except—I leave you. And so—I will go away."

Neither moved nor spoke. The man leaned back with arms hanging limp as after exhausting physical effort. Silence and darkness more intense than the silence and darkness of the night encompassed them.

"You cannot, my poor Keith," she stammered. "You do not mean it. It would be too disastrous—you are barely established—you—"

"What does that matter?" he said drearily. "I have no ambition, and I could make a living for myself and—and—those dependent upon me anywhere, I suppose. It is the only thing to do. Oh, I ought to have done it before now. I ought to have gone without a word. That's clear enough. But—I had not the strength."

The Garden of Eden

"That we two should make each other miserable!" she moaned.

"Because I love you so! Because you are the dearest thing on earth to me! Because I want you — near me — close to my heart — always — every day and hour. Because if we go on, there will be trouble — for nothing stands still. Your fair name will be soiled. And I could do nothing. I who would give my life for you could not help you an atom. If they should simply say we were here together to-night, the only thing I could do would be to put a bullet through my head. It would not help that what they say would be untrue. I could not bear it. I've made a muddle of my own life. If I can help it I won't make a muddle of yours. I would rather see you dead than hurt in any way through me, I would rather see you dead!"

Dropping upon his knees he held her fast with strong arms and pressed his face against hers and rocked her slightly to and fro and murmured indistinct fond names until she heard a sob and felt hot tears, a man's tears, on her cheek, — and she was frightened.

"Oh," she faltered, helpless, cut to the heart, "you must not suffer so — Poor dear — My poor, poor Keith! There must be a way. We will find it together."

The Garden of Eden

Shook his head hopelessly, his cheek
 rest hers.

"You would rather see me dead?" she
questioned awestruck.

"Dead," he whispered.

"You could give up all you have gained
here, inch by inch, after all your hardships
and disappointments?"

He nodded.

"You could really — *leave me*, Keith?"

"I must."

And because he, her pride and strength,
was bowed in grief, something began to rise
above the softness and sweetness of her love,
above her mere fondness for the man — some
nobler instinct strong to save.

"Keith," she said brokenly, with dry throat,
"a thought has come to me. I cannot speak
it *yet*, — not yet, dear — There may be another
way. But you shall not suffer so for me —
not like this — you shall not, Keith."

Speechless, they cowered miserably together
in the dread shadow of parting. The small
shrill note of a bell rang out sharply in the
still night.

Monica sprang up.

"Lilian's bell! She wants me — I mean —
Pater wants me!"

“Go,” he said, beside himself with alarm. “I ought not to have let you stay. I ought not to have let you come. Oh, love, love — that I can be so weak a thing and let you run such risks. Go Monica — FAST!”

II

As Monica crept softly up the dark stairway, some one above suddenly turned on light, and she saw Judge Trevor and a servant standing in the upper hall.

"Did you remember to bolt the library door, my dear?" asked the old man, tranquilly.

"Yes, Pater."

"I beg you will pardon me, dear child," he went on with punctilious distinctness. "I took the liberty to ring. I know you always rest better in the open air, and, thanks to our good dogs, the garden is a safe place. But I feared you were forgetting the lapse of time, and the night is damp."

"Thanks, Pater."

"I hope you are not too chilly. Let me take you to your room." Offering her his arm in his ceremonious fashion, — "Charles, pray bring a small glass of sherry to Miss Monica's room."

As they crossed the hall, three doors closed in muffled succession. In her room Judge Trevor remarked urbanely:

"Some of our amiable cousins were perturbed by your absence. There was a perceptible flutter of solicitude. It seems one of them went to your room, and, not finding you, rang for the servants. Cousin Sarah even proposed heroic measures — search in the garden — lanterns. You might feel faint, she declared. I was obliged to say I preferred no one should disturb you, that you had earned your right to solitude, and fainting lay utterly beyond the range of your talents. This panic in the dovecote is in itself of no consequence whatever, but you will understand why I finally rang Lilian's bell. I hope it did not startle you."

"Dear Pater!" she said mechanically. Cousin Sarah and her adjuncts dwelt not one instant in her thoughts. Meanwhile the penetrating gaze of the old man's startlingly beautiful blue eyes rested on her white, dazed face.

"Thank you, Charles. You may go now. No, I shall require nothing further. Besides, Nichols is near if I should need her. And, Charles," he added kindly, "I hope you will have at least a good night's rest. You have been very faithful, very helpful. Now, my dear, drink this at once."

Under his profoundly meditative glance she sipped the wine with reluctant little gulps, and stared at him apathetically over her glass.

Partially paralyzed, in physique hardly more than a bowed small skeleton walking about in men's clothing, Judge Trevor suggested, in the best sense of the phrase, the air of courts. With the subtle flavor of his antiquated decorum, with his rare intellectual supremacy, his faint wise smile, half sweetness half cynicism, there he stood, the gentle old aristocrat, constraining them to do his will; mindful of his weary old servant, mindful of the heart tumult of the self-absorbed young girl, mindful of all the world except of his plucky old self.

Monica was still more or less in the arbor, and the laming terror of the thought which had confronted her there at the last half benumbed her faculties; but she now roused herself sufficiently to say:

"May I not watch with you to-night?"

"I thank you," he replied graciously. "Everything is arranged. It is the last night — and I prefer to be alone," he added, his face placid and inscrutable.

"Then I will go over an instant to Lilian."

"That too I must deny you, dear child," he returned with sweet imperturbability. "Lilian needs nothing more. I need nothing more. But you need all your strength."

The great clear eyes regarded her unwavering, insistent.

"Pater," she said abruptly, "I was with Keith Lowell in the garden."

"I hope Dr. Lowell is very well this evening," he rejoined courteously, with the air of one for whom life has no surprises.

"Thanks, yes," she murmured.

"You will see your mother to-morrow?"

"Yes, Pater, after — afterwards."

"After the funeral," he amended carefully.

"An admirable woman, your mother; a woman of sound judgment and unfailing goodness of heart. I have always admired your mother."

She waited mute, forlorn.

Stroking her white cheek with a bony trembling hand, and smiling steadily, he said:

"Brave little friend, Lilian's friend, talk with your mother."

Suddenly, inexplicably — her emotions were always inopportune — the pathos of his unselfishness, his isolation touched her beyond

control, and she exclaimed with a rush of hot tears:

"Ah, Pater, Pater, how good you are!"

"That is well, Monica. Tears are better for youth than a white strained face. That was no sort of face for our bright Monica. I am much relieved, for now you will sleep I think. Good night, dear child."

"You are so good," she repeated.

"Men are not good; only women are good," rejoined the shrivelled old gentleman, with his grand air. At the door he turned and said:

"Talk with your excellent mother, Monica."

All night long the thought haunted Monica like a grim, an unbidden guest. Menacing, inflexible, it would not budge for all her pretty sophistry, her logic of the heart. She begged and prayed, she wept and writhed before it. "I cannot, I cannot," she moaned. "Not this. Anything but this. There must be another way."

"I am the way," responded the stern Thought. "Not a rosy way, not a happy way; nay, a thorny, lonely way — but the only way for you."

Through the night watches her soft youth, loving self, loving pleasure, loving love,

seeking its own with blind, elemental force, contended passionately with the Thought; flung itself desperately against the intruder, and was always worsted; sought to hide, to flee, and found no refuge, no escape, while across the hall the wise old man sat motionless by his beloved dead, his patient heart brooding down the past.

But some brief dense sleep toward morning, a cold bath, and the sharp autumnal air restored to her elastic body its freshness, and re-endowed her spirit with its birthright, — immoderate hopefulness. Keith had well said in the arbor she was no tragic figure. Her morning mood was a great upspringing of vital forces, an intense joy in mere existence, an eagerness to sally forth and conquer a few worlds.

She stood at her open window, and looked down on the garden, so flooded with sunlight that bare brown twigs shone bravely, dead leaves grew gay and golden. Between the giant trunks of a belt of old oaks circling the embankment, and through the splendid mulioned tracing of their naked branches, she saw the water, sparkling and rough. In this electric atmosphere the Thought dwindled and slunk away to the dim recesses of her

mind. Her glance rested upon the roof of the arbor nestling in shrubbery, but the spectres of the night were exorcised. Her lover's forebodings and manful resolve no longer chilled her heart. The crooked would straighten itself, facts would melt away, the obliging world would relinquish its solid precepts and more solid prejudices, other miracles would take place, — in short, the heavens would open for her and Keith. Vaguely, but thus benignly, in the strength of the morning and of her great temperamental lightheartedness, she appointed her destiny.

But the day's duties demanded her. Presently she was making the round of the long rooms, inspecting them with a careful business-like mien. As quasi-daughter of the house, she was wont to do this for Lilian, and did it now, alas, for Lilian. Such a reflection evoked by poor commonplace acts could shake her mightily, and blind her eyes with a mist of sudden tears which she jealously concealed and controlled. Yet before that long, solemn, strange shape that was not Lilian, she could stand tearless, at moments moved indeed by a mysterious awe, yet oftener destitute of all emotion, as if her heart were benumbed.

Still worse, and for this she reproached herself with deep distress, her mind there in the audience chamber of death could obstinately dwell upon some foolish thing unmeet, she deemed, to enter these chill precincts.

"Dearest Lilian," she implored humbly many times that day, "forgive me that I cannot mourn aright. You know that I loved you. You know I shall always love you. I cannot tell why I am not prostrate with grief. I suffered when you suffered. Now you are at rest, I am calm. But I love you dearly, Lilian, even if I am cold and strange."

Cold and strange, the ubiquitous cousins gliding about in new crêpe trains, and weeping solicitously behind handkerchiefs bordered with one inch of anguish, unanimously pronounced her. They were, they regretted to say, unfavorably impressed with Miss Randolph. Since she was not, after all, of the family, she gave herself, they thought, important airs. In this respect they may have been not altogether wide of the mark.

Monica on her tour of inspection approached Lilian's grand piano, closed, mute, weighed down by sad trophies, a mound of tuberose, camellias and palms. Lifting the plush cover, the girl touched with lingering

caress the swelling flank of the dumb instrument, once so informed with soulful life when, in the twilights of blessed years, Lilian, calm, powerful, with large, supple hands, commanded all harmonies, invoked and revealed the spirits of the masters. In the magisterial arm-chair at the left, Judge Trevor, to whom Beethoven was a dead language, all music but an indifferent noise, used, whether friends were present or not, to hold out manfully, tenacious, sedate and suave to the last chords. 'Thirty years' difference in their ages; yet what pair of young lovers could compare with them in mutual deference, devotion and subtle sympathy! To watch their intercourse was a liberal education. Ah, the memories! The familiar, lifeless things that lifted up voices and wept! There were the vases they always filled with goldenrod after easy summer drives along interminable wood roads. Even the grinning pagodas, the trifles in ivory, silver, and shell spoke with tongues, told tales of grace and goodness, recalled some apt word, some droll fancy. For instance, that little Japanese paper-knife — Monica was regarding it fondly, but hearing a rustle, put it down and passed on.

In that great dining-room with its old and handsome appointments, she had had her place every Sunday evening since she was a little thing—and on every week-day when her mother did not enter protest. What could they have wanted of the crude young girl, and how boundless their indulgence! What had she not heard there! Merely to look at Lilian, perfect and happy hostess, placed a timid soul at ease. Beyond prettiness, far more than fascinating, with the pale, irregular, rugged face, the rich voice, the large kind smile, the eloquent hands—men loved to talk with her, for she never reminded them that she was cleverer than they. Yet, whatever was under discussion at those bright dinners, — books, pictures, politics, law, human problems, — her completing final word, whether wise or witty or gracious or profoundly kind, was as indispensable as the keystone to the arch. Oh, the laughter! The laughter! O, sweet, wise Lilian, large of brain, large of heart — what you were cannot die. What you were, you are, in our hearts as in the larger life — that wonderful new land where you are gone.

Monica leaned on a high carved chair, and there was heartbreak in her smile. But

Cousin Sarah coming in noiselessly, and having no key to it, misinterpreted it woefully, while Monica stiffened and passed on; for she had not yet learned to be merciful to bores and prying fussy folk.

In Lilian's corner of the library, Monica sat down in a low chair, stared stolidly at the pile of soft-hued silk pillows, and here the dreary sense of personal loss, often strangely absent, seized her suddenly with force. The room had the sacredness of a confessional; Monica's priest, year after year, had been that older friend to whom nothing was worthless that the child chattered, and, as the years went on, the girl and woman thought and dreamed.

The doors opened on the broad veranda: the generous sunny garden slope, where Lilian used to mother her roses like children, and know if one among thousands drooped and hung its head; the massive oaks standing guard; the vistas of flashing water and summer sky; breaths from the flowers, breaths from the bay; the serried ranks of books gravely listening; and on the cushions the waxen face gleaming with intelligence and goodness.

In this corner Monica had first heard of Keith. Vaguely, delicately, with infinite

indulgence, Lilian told a tale indistinct, mysterious in outline, clouded by the girl's ignorance of life, and of foreign detail. But the story haunted and thrilled Monica, and Keith Lowell, before he ever approached the town, before she ever dreamed of seeing the man face to face, loomed, in her imagination, like some antique figure of expiation: some strong, sad soul — shadowy — Prometheus like.

It was a year ago that Lilian, lying on those pillows where she lay more and more, asked Monica simply if she would come and help her and Pater bear the illness. If things should go tolerably well they would read some good books and play Schumann symphonies — and study all the Wagner *Leitmotive* — besides, she'd got a lot of charming new things of Grieg and Rubinstein — and they'd have bright people to dinner, and a nice sort of winter although quiet; and if things should go the other way, and it seemed they might, she added, in a bright, calm parenthesis — she'd had some swoons or something rather uncanny — would Monica stay with her to the last. She added, Mrs. Randolph had, with splendid unselfishness, approved the plan, and Monica should see her mother every day.

The year was over, and this was the day of Lilian's funeral.

Monica rose and rearranged the pretty sofa pillows, and some part of her brain was careful as to the gradation of color.

All that was happening in the dear old house seemed a wrong to Lilian. She had made her home harmonious as was her life. Even the terrible illness she kept in abeyance as long as her bright spirit was in command. The sure knowledge of her doom she had borne with complete absence of pose, spoke little of bodily infirmities, and never otherwise than with a certain negligent grace, a benevolent euphuism, knowing, unerringly, the others would suffer less poignantly while she had strength to smile. One afternoon six months ago, they had propped her up in her bed at her request, brought her jewels, trinkets and other personal effects, to which she attached some sentimental worth, and noted her wishes concerning them. Lilian presided with a gentle air of doing the honors as at one of her own dinners. Judge Trevor, equally tranquil and courteous, alert to meet her commands; she, Monica, at first startled and distressed, but constrained by their serenity, finally fetching box and vase in matter-

of-fact obedience, taking part in the discussion even smiling at Lilian's droll reminiscences and at Pater's mildly sardonic comment.

"Thanks, it has been very pleasant, it has amused me," she said cordially. Then she and he, hand in hand, placid, silent, sat waiting — waiting — while Monica, strangely uplifted, yet with turbulent heart, fled to the garden to revere them, to question and rebel.

Now she asked herself why people should draw down their mouths for Lilian who never once had drawn down her mouth for herself? Why all the ghastly black mummery, the voices and heavy tread of strange men, the rank odors of disinfectants? Even the messenger boys with flowers felt it incumbent to thrust before their grinning faces the sudden tragic mask.

Was this the best we could do, — the noblest, the tenderest? How had the whole perfunctory procedure changed since that wise protest in the sixteenth century? The fearful looks and astonishing countenances, the visitation of dismayed and swooning friends, the pale-looking, distracted, and whining servants.

But the large funeral, conducted with all the hopeless, cumbersome rites and circum-

stantial torture with which the thing we call civilization at the close of the nineteenth century encompasses the beloved dead and exhausts weary mourners, wore to a close. Judge Trevor and Monica took that slow, sad drive together — silent and calm — except once, when the girl was moved with nameless compassion, because the old gentleman, shivering under his furs, small as an emaciated child, leaned from his corner to adjust a rug which had fallen from her knees.

III

MONICA leaned back, heard as if far away the crackling of the wood fire, the simmering of the tea-kettle, and the gentle movements of her mother's hands among the cups and saucers. The very peace of the familiar surroundings served to accentuate the official dreariness and lugubrious bustle of the scenes she had but left. In this present restfulness, her heart began to mourn for Lilian simply, intensely; at the same time she experienced a physical sensation of sinking—sinking into bottomless depths, and closed her eyes most wearily with a desolate sigh, for before this good mother no mask was needed, no proud control, no stern repression of stray emotions.

“Drink your tea, dear.” Hearing the cordial voice full of tender authority, the tired girl vaguely recognized after the fatigue of much soul-conflict the enfolding sweetness of the tutelage which this fair, strong mother had never quite abdicated.

“It is ghastly business—a funeral,” Monica said faintly.

"It is harrowing, certainly," returned the sensible voice; "but you would not have them dance."

"No, but I'd have it calm, sweet — sure and self-composed, like Lilian herself — beautiful with flowers, noble with real music, not desecrated by cheap hymns, — different, quite different," she murmured, her eyes closed.

"Doubtless it will be different and better some day," Mrs. Randolph rejoined easily; "but that we must leave to Church and State, I suppose. Meanwhile —"

Monica sat up quickly, and looked at her mother. That soft "meanwhile" was eloquent in incompleteness.

"Drink your cup out, Monica, and let me give you some more tea," Mrs. Randolph urged, "and eat a little, dear. After one begins, it is not so difficult. Mary made the cake specially for you. Or a sandwich? They are so very light. These, here, are chicken."

Monica complied mechanically, her questioning eyes still on her mother. Each gazed at the other as at herself in a mirror, or as at the loved features of a sister, so close was the resemblance between mother and child. Close, too, sisterly and satisfying was their companionship, unclouded ever save for the present

portentous shadow. They had the same deep blue, emotional eyes in faces otherwise calm, in which was no suggestion of pessimism, nothing *fin de siècle* or neurotic. They were fair, strong, tall women, by nature blithe of spirit, warm of heart, and had loving, very human mouths, such as Murillo gives his long procession of beatific and comely and comfortable-looking saints in St. Clara's dying vision. Contemplating the other's most dear and familiar countenance, the soft lines grew a bit firmer, for each knew the time was now come for the long-deferred but inevitable battle royal. Mrs. Randolph drew her chair nearer the fire, and sat down. Monica steadied herself.

"How has our dear old judge borne the day?"

"Well, I think. One cannot tell, he is so uncomplaining. After all, what is to-day, hideous as it is, in comparison with all the other days?"

"Little indeed, yet infinitely mournful, because the end."

Monica shuddered.

"Are you too tired to talk with me, dear, this evening? Would you rather wait till to-morrow?"

"Certainly not, mamma. I am not so very

tired, not physically tired, that is — and waiting will help neither of us," she added sadly.

After another long pause, Mrs. Randolph began:

"There is much unsaid between us, Monica."

"Not unsaid, because you were too good: said once: but not resaid in these last months," sighed the girl, hardly above her breath.

The mother gave her one rapid, pitiful glance, stared anew at the fire, and asked, with great mildness:

"How have you planned your future, Monica? I mean the immediate future."

"I have planned nothing, mamma. I have had no time," the girl answered pleadingly, startled to hear from her mother's lips the echo of her lover's words.

"Yes, dear. I know you are still living in the midst of sorrow and excitement. You have not consciously made definite plans for the morrow. But vaguely, involuntarily, you must have pictured your course. Dear Lilian's martyrdom is over."

"Thank God!" murmured Monica passionately.

"Thank God!" repeated Mrs. Randolph. "But this changes everything — and it breaks my silence. I could not speak when you were

bound, and had such worlds of care on your young shoulders. I thought you had heart-ache enough, dear. But you have held out bravely the whole long year of bondage," she added with a quick glance of pride. "You have been a wonderful friend—ready to lay down your life for Lilian, and 'greater love hath no man than this.' It is much of your life that you have given her, if the truth were known—but then you have more life to give than most." Forgetting her theme, she looked fondly at her child, exulting in her, idolizing her beyond measure and reason.

Monica listened motionless and silent. What had she ever given Lilian, weighed against Lilian's incomparable sweetness to her? What was the poor little futile year of service, doomed to failure from the start—the year that could not save the dear one from one pang, or ward off one single disaster of the many that, hovering long, descended at last to blight and kill? Strange, fateful year in which brain and hand had worked their staunchest, and the heart, thrilled and swayed by alternate sorrow and love, and struggling in each instance in a distinctly lost cause, had yet dared to know great gleams of gladness. But all was over. Lilian and the year were dead.

Keith said it last night in the arbor. His thoughts were her mother's thoughts; his anxiety hers. But why would they not leave things to arrange themselves; why not drift a little, and rest and be still? — since what was infinitely dear must suffer and die miserably, and what was high and beyond all dreaming lovely was forbidden and called sin. Heart-sick, oppressed, Monica waited.

After the brief outburst of maternal complacency Mrs. Randolph resumed quietly, with a determined air of knowing well and meaning to speak without subterfuge or circumlocution, the text which she had traced with her heart's blood and painfully conned in bitter hours.

"Monica, you know how it was when Lilian begged me to let you come to her. I thought it would occupy you, monopolize you — divert your mind from Dr. Lowell — in short, be your safeguard — rescue you. So I gave my consent eagerly — and you promised, with my sanction, to stay to the end, whatever should come. I thought you were in a safe haven. Seeking the best for you, I did the worst. I could not foresee Judge Trevor would summon Dr. Lowell in consultation with Dr. Irwin."

"No one foresaw that, mamma."

"It broke my heart anew. I have not had

one moment's peace since. I could not bear the thought of those daily meetings. But I recognized that it was inevitable. Neither you nor I could retract. We had given our word."

"Mother, you have been generous! Never think I do not know that."

"Besides," continued the mother with her large air of retrospection and fidelity to every point in her long premeditated argument, "the exigencies of that horrible illness and your lifelong devotion to Lilian legitimized to the world your presence in that house even if they could never to me sanctify certain aspects of the situation. I could not blame you for being at your post. I endured and was silent. But it is over — all the good you did: all the rest that was not good. What are you going to do now, Monica?"

Monica shook her head.

"I don't know, mamma."

"'I don't know' is imbecile," retorted Mrs. Randolph with well-tempered urbanity. "It is your duty to know. It is your duty to think. We are not here in this world to drift like seaweed. Whatever intelligence we have, it is our duty to drive to the utmost. It is not like you to shirk responsibility, Monica. You were not

cowardly once — when your conscience was clear.”

“My conscience reproaches me for nothing, mamma, and if I am cowardly of speech it is because I dread to hurt you, and be hurt myself — and we always hurt each other, you know, dear, when we speak of this.”

Mrs. Randolph sighed assent.

“But it is not words that hurt most. What are they to the situation itself, that leaves me no peace by day or by night?”

“I know, dear,” Monica agreed regretfully.

Mrs. Randolph poured out some tea, drank it and reflected it was difficult to make head-way with Monica, who appeared to sympathetically deplore the distress she was involuntarily causing, yet to retain a great pagan unconsciousness of moral wrong.

“When did you see Dr. Lowell last?”

“I gave him my hand silently one instant in the hall to-day as he came in and I passed out, and I met him by appointment last night late, in the garden.”

“A rendezvous! While Lilian lay dead!”

“I could do no more for her,” Monica replied gently. “You have said yourself you think I did what I could. Lilian did not mind my seeing him now and then. Pater, too,

knew very well. It was not often at best. So I think it was no disloyalty to Lilian that I spoke with him alone last night — after so long — ”

“ Disloyalty to her, no,” said the mother.

“ Besides, Lilian understood ! ”

“ That is the incredible feature of the whole relationship, Monica. You undermine people’s principles. Something in you makes them condone what they ought to condemn.”

“ In him, in him ! ” Monica exclaimed jubilantly. “ Lilian loved him.”

“ Personal charm cannot make wrong right,” the mother declared stoutly.

“ But you love him too. You cannot help it,” persisted Monica, with a smile of triumph. “ You trust him.”

“ Oh, he is not ill looking — I grant you, not unsympathetic — not dull — ”

“ Ah, mamma ! ” pleaded Monica with love-light in her eyes.

“ I do like him. In a certain sense I do trust him,” the mother rejoined gravely. “ My gnawing anxiety might be a degree worse if, in addition to everything else, I had to think him a scoundrel. I admit he is lovable, handsome, a fine, tall, strong, young fellow, fascinating, if you will, to girls from

the sadness of his romantic story. And I am sorry for him, exceedingly sorry. It is all very deplorable at his age."

She spoke with gentle emphasis and paused, desiring to make her fine restraint and justice obvious to Monica, who was smiling brilliantly.

"I will go farther. I will admit that once when I saw you two standing together in this room I even thought, if he were a free man, how I would welcome him. Can I say more? It is wrong indeed to say as much. But he is not a free man. He has made his bed and he must lie on it. And if he were a God," she broke out impetuously, "I should not thank him for what he has done to you, to us. For it is a grievous wrong. Perhaps he could not help loving you. I do not know. There's much a man can help if he will. But he need not have let you love him. He need not have come so dangerously far into your fair life."

"Ah when, in what, was he ever at fault toward me? Fate sent him."

"Oh yes! Fate! Fate is the scapegoat for all human weakness and guilt!"

"Mother, I beg you to remember—" said Monica, solemn, passionate, warning.

"I remember well. I remember nothing else," returned her mother grimly.

"For myself I make no excuse," Monica continued. "What is come was to come. I will not say it might not have burst upon me in a drawing-room amid people and laughter and lightness, for true love may prevail even there. I will not say what I might have done had I found myself creating misery in a home, consciously interposing between man and wife, drawing off tenderness from its rightful channel. I hope, had it been thus, I should not have proved ungenerous. But how shall I dare to arrogate strength—having known Keith? For—having known Keith—never while I live can I condemn any woman for anything she may do for love's sake."

Her mother groaned aloud as if in intolerable physical pain.

"But it was not thus. There was no home. There was no tenderness. I intruded upon no intimacy, came between no two souls. I saw but one, a strong lonely man, free as air, except in name. In sorrow and bitterness we two found each other. Mother, it is fair to remember!"

"I remember. Never fear."

"Did he seek me? He avoided me. Was he not innocent, remote from us? You fell and broke your arm. Why was Dr. Irwin

out of town in consultation? Could Keith help it that they brought him to you? Was he, was I, to blame that when he crossed the threshold we looked, wondering, in each other's eyes—and it was then, then—that he came into my life —”

“You are to blame. You and he, for loving when loving is sin.”

“Oh, mother dear! The hard word. Can any loving that ever was be sin?”

“Monica!”

“I do not know. I merely ask,” the girl said softly.

“A married man! Once you would have had only horror at the thought.”

“I know, dear. But his coming —”

“Blinded you, my poor erring child.”

“No, no,” she exclaimed with a rapt smile, “no, mother darling. It was sudden, wonderful—but it was mighty, and—I saw! It was as if we two had been separated and refound each other. As we worked over you, he giving his quiet orders, I obeying, I hardly needed words: I obeyed his grave eyes: I knew them. It was as if we had been like that, we three, ages upon ages ago.”

“Oh yes,” rejoined Mrs. Randolph with excitement, “I saw it, felt it all. I admit there

was a strange magnetism in the air that night. Despite pain and chloroform I was not too dull to perceive it thrilling your faces, your low voices, your ministering hands, but my girl should have resisted it, because it was evil."

"Never evil, mother, and no more to be resisted than birth or death! But when I was alone I fought hard. All night long I wrestled with my angel. My traditions preached one thing, life revealed another. I thought—but quite remorselessly, with my coolest brain, you know—I was a lost soul, wicked like all I had been taught to loathe. I saw myself walking the streets like poor Hester Prynne with a scarlet letter on my breast. I tried to abhor myself. Through the long hours the old and the new struggled for victory. And the strange thing was, while my head was proclaiming *This is sin—This is sin!* my heart held itself aloof, did not feel sinful, feared not at all, trembled with joy recalling the face of the man. As if an idle voice called empty words unheeded from a frozen mountain peak, while in the low, warm valley all was joy. Yet something in me was appalled that I could not realize my wickedness and feel as I had been taught to feel. Finally out of the

tumult I extracted this idea: either I am depraved, or I am good. If I was good yesterday, as all the world and I myself thought, then what I did not seek, what burst upon me like a great —”

“Disaster!”

“Like a great glory cannot make me in myself another person, cannot in itself be a crime. So gradually it was dawn before all grew clear to me—I reconciled the conflicting head and heart. Since then I have never wavered an instant. I do not defend everything I have done. I know I am headstrong—impetuous—and selfish—yes, selfish. I know I make your heart ache, mother. But what is in my soul for him, that is good, that is innocent. I would go to the stake for it. The world may judge as it will. I will never call it a sin. God who sent it knows it is no sin, but good—good to the core!”

“Oh yes,” retorted Mrs. Randolph, strongly moved, condemning yet reluctantly sympathizing. “You were always a little Job. Like him you cry, ‘I will not remove my integrity from me.’ But even if all you say were true—and it is not true, Monica—you and Keith Lowell are human precisely like everybody else: there is no pellucid heavenly atmosphere

enveloping you and no glory: but if it were true, what then? How is it to end? This, if you please, we will discuss plainly, not poetically. The quasi-legitimation of your intimacy with Dr. Lowell is removed by Lilian's death. I, your mother, condemn and oppose your theories and your conduct. I will not lend my protection or my house to an immoral relationship. And although you neither respect my opinions nor consider my pain — ”

“ Mother! ”

“ I believe you still love me well enough — ”

“ Ah mother! ”

“ To indicate your course frankly. Therefore I ask you, Monica, is it your intention to continue these disreputable clandestine interviews with a married man? Ah, why writhe under the words if the facts are so immaculate as you pretend! I repeat, these disreputable clandestine meetings — which will lead you and me and him to utter misery — ”

Monica was pale to the lips, for with her mother pleaded another voice, and the Thought which had slumbered began to stir.

“ Yes, him too, Monica! There can be no doubt of that. You will ruin him altogether. He had gathered up the fragments of his broken life and was seeking manfully to go on

—until he met you. You will wreck him in the best that he has left, his profession, his usefulness, his peace of mind, his last chance of happiness.”

Once more Monica rallied.

“Do you remember that rainy summer night, more than a year ago, when you were at your Club and I came home from Helen’s early and alone? I met him. It was pure accident. He turned without one word. He slipped my arm in his. We walked on, against wind and rain, with fast, light, long step. We were so glad we seemed to tread on air. We met almost no one. At every gas lamp he lowered his umbrella. We went straight out to the end of the street beyond the houses. There were building materials — stone, a great irregular pile of planks. The upper ones projected. He found a place just large enough. There we sat sheltered, the rain pattering on the wood and all around. We were as merry as two runaway schoolboys, whispered absurd jests mysteriously and laughed under our breath, as if we feared to wake some one. But not a soul was near. He told me stories of his boyhood and of his student life abroad. Oh the smell of the moist earth — the smell of the pine — the rain dripping heavily — the

world forgotten — he — very near! Mother, was that iniquitous? ”

From the depths of the great loving mother heart compassion and tenderness shot up with force and gleamed and wavered across the fair troubled face: nay, more: the unwilling tribute of subtle comprehension and dangerous sympathy the woman was rendering to the woman. Hence, to the girl's piteous appeal Mrs. Randolph replied with aggressive coolness:

“ Monica, what if all the girls of your set should follow your example and each sit on a pile of planks in the rain on terms of closest intimacy with a married man? Would you consider this a proof of a fine moral sense in the community? ”

“ Quite as much so at least,” retorted Monica hotly, “ as when Kitty says, ‘ I cannot bear him to touch me, and when he laughs I simply hate him. But I cheer myself on with the thought of his beautiful bank account.’ ”

“ Kitty is a silly little thing, and chatters without rhyme or reason: which by no means proves that, once married, she will not be a happy and affectionate wife. But in any event I think you, Monica, have forfeited your right to criticise Kitty's conduct.”

Monica clutched at a straw.

"You say once married, mamma. Is that a charm — once married? Look at the married ones. Take every family on this street. Look at their bored faces when they are walking together. Is it moral to live together under one roof but worlds apart in sentiment? To loathe their chains, quarrel, and yet, merely because they mistook their sentiments twenty years ago, to continue the sordid, cowardly, hypocritical relationship — and without love bring children into the world. Except Pater and Lilian I never knew a happy marriage."

"Mature people," returned Mrs. Randolph calmly, "have many cares and perplexities. Life brings differences of opinion and often builds a crust round the heart. But below it a man and his wife may love each other very truly all the same — without adventures or rhapsodies. But," — facing Monica with sudden intensity of expression, "if, as you assert, marriage is a failure, how do you account for it?"

"Because people do not really love," answered the girl innocently.

"Ah, no, no!" cried the mother with cool intelligence pushing her advantage, "because they change, Monica. The most of our neighbors that seem to you to-day so prosaic, so

unsatisfied and unsatisfying, have had their brief bright season of romantic love. But ideals change — theirs, yours and mine. Sentiments, even religion, you yourself do not believe what you believed ten, nay, five years ago. You, too, change, you see. You, too, must change. The great ardor and exaltation — that never lasts. It is not meant it should. And you are so thoughtful, so reasonable, Monica, this must teach you, must convince you incontrovertibly that one cannot sacrifice everything — name — fame — friends — happiness — to that fleeting mirage, an illicit love.

“Yes, illicit,” she repeated firmly, in reply to Monica’s mute protest. “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. That is my creed. You look at me with questioning eyes — but the divorce was wrong. I have known that for years. I ought to have borne everything without complaint. Marriage, any marriage, the most thoughtless, the most ill-matched and unhappy is a promise before God. No one can break that promise with impunity. Whoever reaches out with perverse, greedy hand to grasp what has been sacredly sealed to a fellow creature, does a deed accursed of God and man.”

In the soft, womanly presence of the mother battling with her beloved child for that child's weal—two mighty foes in truth in the field, mother love and the love of man and woman—a stern intrepid Hebrew strain appeared, a touch of the high austerity of some old Puritan ancestor.

"Monica, in spite of your modern notions, I know you still believe in Christ."

"In the divine element in Christ—and in us all," the girl murmured.

"Christ said: Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

"Oh, mother, mother," cried Monica desperately, moving her head slowly from side to side—vaguely seeking help—"be merciful, it is all so terrible."

She covered her face with her hands. Mrs. Randolph leaned back in silence. There was a brief armistice. Both were weary and oppressed. Each dreaded to go on. Suddenly Monica said low, as if thinking aloud:

"Perhaps Christ never said it. Or at least perhaps he never said it quite like that. They are always disputing about translations. And if he did—if he did—"

"Well?"

"Perhaps he meant it otherwise — for is it true? Is there no difference between resisting temptation and yielding to it? If a man wants to strike a murderous blow and restrains himself has he committed murder in his heart? But his heart has saved a life. If a hungry man wants to steal and does not, is he a thief? I should think him a very honest man. It must be a false translation, mamma. But how foolish I am to mind words, knowing Keith!"

Her mother made a grave deprecating gesture and remained silent. For the plenary inspiration of the Bible she was ever ready to break a lance, but not this night.

"It is all so futile, mamma dear," Monica went on, deadly pale and with effort. "Let us not argue any more, you and I. I cannot change you. You cannot change me — at least, not in these things. But if you would not speak of Keith as if he were a criminal when he has been all nobleness from first to last, and if you would not require me to think what I cannot think, if you will simply tell me what you believe would help us — us three — how *you* have planned my future — I will listen, I will try to be reasonable."

"Recall Major Lynton."

"Because I love one man, marry another?"

"Because one man exerts a perilous fascination over you, seek refuge in the devotion of another, — one of the best of men."

"He would not want me if he knew."

"He does know approximately, and he does want you. He is far too much a man of the world not to make allowances for a girl's romance."

"I cannot, mother," said Monica drearily, for the Thought was facing her, large and ominous.

"Monica, darling Monica, for my sake! I have never forced you in any inclination whatever, though so many good men have come and have been sent away, and I have wondered that you could be so cold."

"I am sorry, dear. I could not help it."

"Men of intellect, of wealth and high position, who could give you all you could wish — all you deserve —"

"I did not love them, mother."

"There are several who would return with but half a word from you, and you would be safe and I at peace. Is there not one whom you like?"

"Not one whom I love."

"No girl in town except yourself would

refuse Major Lynton. His distinction — his charm — his great goodness of heart — ”

“ Yes, yes. He is nice, I know, but even then it would have been detestable to marry him merely out of a prudent regard for my future interests — and now, it would be blackest crime — Oh,” she cried, flaming up suddenly, “ why must we women be punished for what is best in us? And what is any love worth that counts cost and faints when things are hard, when they exclude comfort, social approval, even possession — marriage — and the beloved companionship! Surely if love be pure, it is self-abandonment.”

“ Self-abandonment,” returned the mother impressively, “ it is a noble word. But why must it always mean following one’s instincts in all that is pleasurable and seductive? Why should there not be self-abandonment in duty — plain duty? ”

Monica trembled, for the Thought overshadowed her. Mother and child stared comfortless at each other.

“ Can you think of no other way but Major Lynton? ” Monica asked feebly.

“ None — unless — unless I beg Dr. Lowell to leave town. He would not refuse me,” she added with dignity, “ but — ” she hesitated

—troubled, solicitous, considering his interests in her heart, fond of the man.

Monica thanked her with a mute wan smile. The girl was exhausted, almost vanquished, but—oh the wonder!—her hope,—poor bruished, crushed, brave thing!—was breathing still.

Again a long silence while their troubled spirits, like the shade of Sisyphus, worked on unceasingly and rolled up in the gloom the huge ever-rebounding stone.

The mother-love girded itself for its last charge. Clear and insistent sounded its opening bugle-note.

“Monica, have I been a good mother to you?”

Mournful and sweet was the answer:

“Never was one so dear—so devoted—so selfless—”

“Then give up this infatuation, which is breaking my heart. Give it up and let us be at peace again, as we were before he came. I tremble every instant for you, my child, and I suffer from the struggle between us. My own dear daughter, were we two ever meant to quarrel? And there are other ways that I suffer—Monica you know I have never liked to speak much to you of your father. It did

not seem right, but now it is time. You have heard how we met, but not all. I was seventeen, he, a fiery wooer. Your grandfather would have nothing to say to him, forbade him the house and told me never to speak to the dissolute scamp. Of course it is not proper a very young girl should know what dissolute means, but had I suspected, much agony might have been spared me. Then he stood under my window, and made melancholy black eyes at me wherever I went, and wrote letters threatening to blow his brains out. They never blow their brains out, Monica. But I was an idiot and believed him. I was romantic like you, dear, I fear it is in the blood. He was handsome and bold, and your grandfather's frostiness piqued him and roused his obstinacy. And I was fascinated, helpless, and flattered to the melting point, for all my girl friends knew I had a tall lover with a sweeping moustache. My mother was dear and good, but rather distant with her children. We never thought of confiding in her. I was freer with my father; his pet child, and it nearly broke his heart that I made a runaway match and brought disgrace upon our good old name. And if you ask me, Monica, this night, why I did him

and us all that wrong, I can only say, I do not know, I was vain, bewildered, dazzled, in a fever of excitement,—but I never loved the man. A few weeks, a few days indeed, were sufficient to reveal to me what he was—I will not speak hard words of him to you. Of what use? That time is so far away and he is so long dead. There is no more hardness in my heart toward him. But it was a time of misery and shame. Your grandfather came and took me home. The divorce followed. But that should never have been. I felt so outraged I demanded my freedom, but I was wrong. I see it now clearly. After my sin I should have borne my punishment with patience.”

“A child of seventeen!” said Monica, tenderly, incredulously.

“I was old enough to be honorable and to do my duty. Yet I ran away disgracefully. I was old enough to know that marriage is sacred, yet merely because I was wretched and insulted, I escaped from my bond. I did all these things. But I have been punished. I have suffered. There is always a stigma attached to a woman divorced.”

“But that is cruel—barbarous. There is no sense in that,” protested Monica.

"It is a fact, nevertheless. Some have not scrupled to let me feel this. Of course your grandfather's name — our position was too secure to be shaken, yet my past lives on like an open wound and I quiver when it is touched. So it has been all these years."

"Dearest mamma!" sighed Monica.

"But I had you, only you, and I lived for you. You were my blessing, my comfort for all I had forfeited and foregone. For other men came, Monica, and — one beloved friend revealed to me my lost Paradise — it was bitter — but in the sight of God I was a married woman still. He helped me to resist — to endure — to stand alone, yet not alone. For you were with me. Until — two years ago — you never gave me an hour's pain, except indeed when you were little — my haunting fear that you would be taken from me in punishment for my sins."

"Oh, mamma, — my poor little mamma — so good, so innocent — so dear!"

"But you were always strong and happy, and as the years went by I began to think God had forgiven me. I was so proud, so sure of you. You seemed of yourself to do what was wise and right. Petty things that other girls did had no chance with you. I was

proud of you as every mother is for a thousand things, for outward gifts and graces, but proudest of your fearless candor — your integrity. Ah, I was proud of you altogether, my Monica!”

Under the hot lashing of this praise Monica was cringing like a convict.

“With men you were so cool and serene. I wondered much. Often, indeed, I was disappointed. Yet I liked you to be fastidious, a little haughty, not eager like a vulgar girl — not wax like your poor foolish mother. Doubtless your constant intercourse with the Trevors helped to make you independent. They have been loving friends. I will not say one word too much. But their ideas, which you call modern and liberal, and I call mistaken — well — sometimes I have thought you might be better off without them. Yet I did not interfere. You found happiness in that house. Your happiness was all I craved — even in the many, many hours you spent with Lilian.”

In Monica's face was a sudden wondering recognition of a fact never before remotely suspected, never even faintly revealed by the mother.

“I thought,” continued Mrs. Randolph,

"some happy day in her own good time my dear daughter will marry and wipe away the stain of her mother's folly and make all fair again, and I waited and was patient, and this was the hope of my life.

"Where is that hope to-day? It lies low in the dust. There is no more gladness in my heart, no more security. Where I was once so proud, I am bitterly ashamed. *Be sure thy sin will find thee out.* Mine is finding me out in what is more precious than life, my child's honor. God is visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children."

Monica had crept to her mother's feet. Crouching, broken, shuddering, she yet raised her hand in protest.

"No sin!" she moaned, "no sin! Not in you. Not in me."

But the mother's solemn voice went on unheeding:

"The sin of my youth is finding me out. My ingratitude, my treachery, my light-mindedness, my cruelty to my own people. And the sins of a father whose hot blood and cold, shallow soul wrecked scores of women's lives — ah, Monica," she cried passionately, "that is my most secret thought! Now my heart lies bare before you. In the long, lonely

nights while you have watched with your dying friend, I have been on my knees wrestling in prayer. Not this, O Lord, I have prayed, not this. Let the curse fall as it will, but spare my child. Do not punish me in her. Keep her soul pure. Keep her life white."

Close against her mother's knee, Monica's drawn, haggard face was pressed. Dumb, half inanimate, strangely confused she lay, but one thing she knew for all time, the Thought was not her foe — the Thought was her friend from the beginning. On her bowed head she now felt her mother's hands, covering her like strong, soft wings.

"I beg you, Monica, now that you know all, I beg you in agony, give up this love, give up this man. It is a glamour. Gain time and you will see. But whether you believe that or not, give him up for your mother's sake — for I die daily in my remorse, in my horrible, horrible fear. And rather than more harm than shame should come to you, I would see you dead here at my feet."

The solemn voice ceased. But Monica heard it still.

"I would rather see you dead," the man's throbbing voice was saying in the arbor, and

she felt his arms holding her fast, the troubled caress of breath, lips, and tears upon her face, and heard the rattling shiver along the vines, or was it in her heart? Which voice had spoken last she hardly knew, for both were pleading ceaselessly the same strain of dread and self-reproach and anguish — mother and lover, lover and mother — in woeful unison. She pitied them so, ah God, how she pitied them! — stronger than her life was her passionate pity for those two most dear, most sorrowful ones breaking their poor hearts over her. She would help them, of course. She was the only one who could help. She would fain tell them this for their comfort. But something in her had stopped or died and left a strangeness and a stillness, and speech and motion seemed remote, unessential things.

“You shall not suffer so,” she said at last.

Did she speak, or the Thought?

“Monica?”

“I will go away.”

Surely it was the Thought that spoke.

“Monica!”

Not asking or caring what these words, more breathed than spoken, might mean, knowing only the cause was won, relief unspeakable and newborn hope coursing mightily

through her, the mother lovingly lifted the drooping head up on her knee. But when she saw that face, the words of thankfulness died upon her lips, and swiftly she stooped and gathered her stricken child to her heart.

IV

HANS NILSSEN — or Nils Hanssen — opened the port-hole. Brawny, massive, grasping the port-lid with powerful fist, he warily scanned the angry blackness of night and ocean. But instinct and the ship's lurch rather than his keen eyes told him when to slam the lid against the onslaught of the next wave. Sometimes he slammed it a second too late, and muttered something strong, in Danish.

The stream of cold pure air playing deliciously about Monica's hot head was usually her first intimation of his presence. Among the myriad noises emitted in pain and wrath by that creaking, crunching, laboring ship, the steward at her door, his step passed unobserved; and in the tumultuous dimness of her stateroom, where innocent raiment swung like malefactors from the gibbet, one apparition more or less was of no moment, and she rarely perceived the broadbacked phantom at the port-hole until his philanthropic mission was accomplished.

But many times, by night and day, through that rough weather, she had cause to bless his gentle thought of her and his silent ministration. Indifferent to the storm, unmindful of general discomfort, persuaded as she knocked about her berth, between sleeping and waking with open apathetic eyes, that so far as she personally was concerned it would be well should the steamer never arrive in port, she nevertheless most inconsequently craved that life-giving breath. In short, not averse to drowning, she yet objected strongly to the smells and bad air pervading her swimming prison-house, where for days waves had been washing the decks, everything closed tight, and passengers, whenever they ventured to show their pallid inquiring countenances above board, curtly ordered below. Revived once more by the blessed draught, she would vaguely wonder that, dead to the world as she now was, she could still desire anything so violently. Breathing, she reflected listlessly, being a mere bodily function, there seemed a certain baseness in her excessive agitation upon this subject. But her good lungs, with that startling obtuseness which our corporeal adjuncts often manifest toward our mental attitude, persisted in their unseemly rebel-

lion against fetid air and suffocation. Whenever their clamor became almost unendurable, Hans Nilssen — or Nils Hanssen — stole in and opened the port-hole. Neither the incidental deluge nor the dash of vigorous Danish chagrin dismayed her. What, indeed, was feeble human profanity amid the vast imprecations of the ship?

Hanssen — or Nilssen — was not, perhaps, specially detailed to succor errant damsels thus assiduously, but rather to meet, so far as was humanly possible, the more or less reasonable demands of passengers of the gruffer sex. As the ladies in that quarter, however, were for the most part imploring the stewardess to throw them overboard, she did not deign to listen to less dramatic requests. So Hans — or Nils — who had a blonde sweetheart in Malmö, and an incredible softness in his big heart toward all her like, became Monica's self-appointed henchman.

He followed her with doglike eyes, hovered about unobtrusively when she moved from place to place, invented pretexts for serving her — things in her stateroom required, it seemed, incessant polishing, fresher than fresh glasses had to be supplied. When she would sometimes by day take refuge in her

berth — the output of strength in bracing and clinging there being rather less than in the endeavor to hold herself upright — and would stare before her hour after hour, wanting nothing except, involuntarily, her modest share of the world's oxygen, apparently hearing and seeing nothing, Hans was troubled. Not thus — *potz tausend!* — should blonde maids spend their time. Once he loomed up suddenly beside her, huge, shy, awkward — like a Brobdingnagian schoolboy — extending in dumb sympathy a package of ginger cakes. She ate one to please him, and never knew they were from his private larder and made by the Malmö girl. Again, he brought her a grog so hot and stiff that she choked and tears ran down her cheeks when she politely tried to swallow a few drops. This experiment pleased him, and he was inclined to repeat it with alarming frequency, until Monica checked his zeal. It was a mute language that they spoke, but they understood each other very well, since the droop of an eyelid, the motion of a finger, a silence suffices for human intercourse where there is sympathy. Nils, good soul, most comfortably dense, doing his thinking with not the faintest sense of responsibility, nevertheless, in

Monica's case, grasped the intrinsic truth, and knew she had left her heart in her home-country.

As for her, the time came when names, faces, scenes upon that ship which bore her outward presence toward unknown lands, faded utterly or floated vaguely in her memory like the fitful visions of legend and dream.—The phantom bark plunging on forever, with its crew of lost souls, surely she knew it well. Dark cells, hermetically closed, rolling fathom deep, and the unceasing moans of women—was that an episode of the Inferno? But fresh and touching, in far distant years, remained her thought of her burly, simple Danish friend, of his quiet eyes, the slow strength of his movements, the fine quality of his awkward homage, his watchfulness like that of a good brother, nay, of a mother; and what she in her brooding self-absorption had not the grace to discover until the voyage was nearly over, his systematic interruption of his own rest that the stranger need not too long miss her breath of pure air.

That luckless steamer was seventeen days crossing the Atlantic, and met with sundry exciting mishaps which could not have oc-

curred, it would appear, had some of the men passengers who had never sailed a ship only been in command. International vituperation ran high, complaints were jotted down in wrath for the *London Times* and the *Paris Herald*, and Americans, born and bred in land, even stopped playing poker, to proclaim with characteristic modesty, how deep sea soundings ought properly to be taken, if those blank Dutchmen understood their business.

But these nautical amenities left Monica indifferent. She passed in and out the salon, hardly speaking a word from morning till night, and was wholly unconcerned that the Scilly Isles persisted in getting in the way of German steamships. — In point of fact, she had been attached in due form to an exemplary family party of women who crossed often, and had the inveterate habit of disappearing from view and reclining upon their individual and collective backs shortly after passing Sandy Hook. As nothing in the subsequent developments of this voyage had encouraged them to abandon their wise recumbency, Monica hardly saw her rich assortment of chaperons from shore to shore. The chaperon is so frequently helpless in the

critical moment, so morally or physically inert, society's touching faith in the omnipotence of this institution puzzles the simple mind. In certain circles, indeed, where charity faileth, the chaperon-shibboleth seems to be substituted to cover a multitude of sins. At all events, had Monica felt adventurously inclined, those five honorable names on the passenger list would have genteelly connived at, not prevented her exploits.

Her adventures were, however, of mild flavor. Sometimes she occupied herself with a pale child, whose people were ill, and who wandered about, patient and cold. Drawn to the small waif, Monica would throw an arm round her and hold her close and warm, both under one fur wrap. But when the little thing, comforted, would nestle more lovingly against her, it was strangely hard to bear, and she could have cried aloud in a paroxysm of homesickness and longing.

One evening, when but a few days out, she sat ostensibly reading in the salon. A group near her were chattering about astrology, graphology, palmistry, and the like, bombarding a dark-bearded foreigner with questions, eagerly stretching out more or less symmetrical palms, believers and sceptics disputing

gayly. Monica heard and did not hear. Presently a soft voice said:

"Pardon me: will you permit me one glance at your hand?" She looked up suddenly into a pair of strange eyes, darker than the dark eyes she had seen, black with a limpid blackness, soft, fiery, unfathomable — the eyes of the Orient.

"No, thanks," she said, grasping her book with both hands. "It is really not worth while. I have no faith in such things."

"But one glance," pleaded the Hungarian.

"Do, Miss Randolph," urged a lady. "Baron Tihanyi will tell you wonders. He is a gypsy, I guess."

To avoid further discussion Monica extended her hand. Tihanyi looked at it gravely, in her face also, thanked her without comment, and returned to his place.

Later, when no one was near, he approached and said, not at all like a modern man talking nonsense, but with the stately air of an ancient priest of Sais, arrayed in flowing robes, and interpreting cabalistic mysteries:

"Life will give you much of richness, sweetness, pain — but never your heart's desire. You are a sea-bird, restless, home-

less, whirling over stormy waters. You will disappear in them and come up wonderfully white and gleaming, and plunge again, and flutter and whirl. So it will be always — never your heart's desire."

After that she childishly avoided him, yet often felt his dark gaze resting upon her, and insisting: "Never your heart's desire." She needed no wise man from the east to tell her this.

Since the night when she had accepted flight as her destiny, short, indeed, was the time counted by days, but, measured by heart-throbs, æons. She felt at times a dull wonder that she had lived through the many partings, each, however light in itself, emblematic of the supreme crucial parting with Keith, and that she was speeding every moment farther and farther from her heart's desire. How brave they had been! Without their strength she never would have found strength to go. "All your geese are swans," the tender, mocking voice had said in the arbor. Well, yes, thank God they were! All whom she loved best were large natures inspiring faith, incapable of an ignoble action. In rare moments this conviction afforded her a certain spiritual sustenance. But not for

long, for she was a thing adrift and rudderless; how weak, not one of them suspected — not even Keith; how merely a loving, longing woman — all her being centred in the past. She welcomed sleep, for in dreams she drove through summer woods with Lilian, emotionless; in dreams she and Keith, without offence or consciousness of this world's rubrics, were busy with foolish, harmless, inconsequent things, and knew no reproach, no parting and no pain. But the waking was bitter — a most ghastly dream, indeed. Surely the comfortless ship, with leagues of sea in its wake, the gray monotony, the poignant loneliness was sheer unreality, and that she lay helpless there, already swept so far away from all his love, and those last heart-breaking, dear farewells — this was a hideous nightmare.

That smiling mother! Not flinching once, not wasting a word upon the separation, pushing preparations with feverish speed, thoughtful of smallest details, foreseeing every imaginable want — as if Monica were bound for some shopless land, turning idle comment into desirable channels, protecting her child, with happy suggestion, creating the atmosphere which should surround her, even

shrewdly revealing rather more maternal vanity than she otherwise would have deemed permissible, dwelling pointedly upon the poor little book, never letting people forget it, to the last instant victoriously playing the rôle of complacent mamma, affable and animated at those terrible dinners during the last hurried days. — That one always must eat! — The day Lilian died they dined sumptuously and had afternoon tea! — In New York they dined out every night! — Gracious with all the people they had to see, ready, cheerful of speech, covering her daughter's silence. — That one always must talk! — standing fair, erect, in full sunshine on the wharf and smiling steadily as the ship steamed slowly off!

Every scene, the most trivial, she lived over and over again. The humming of friends and acquaintances, who thought it most reasonable that she should go to Europe. She had always been "ambitious," they said, and as she had written a book, they sympathized with the consuming thirst for knowledge which she now made manifest. Certain persons, of the preternaturally wise sort, even assured her they were not surprised, they had penetrated her intentions for some months. Kitty remarked, rather enviously:

"I suppose you 'll marry a prince, Monica," and her mother retorted stoutly:

"She may, if there 's one over there good enough for her!"

A deputation of advanced women declared they were proud of her energy and emancipation; they considered her a pioneer. Only when girls, instead of dawdling in the chimney-corner, and thinking exclusively of lovers, were eager to go out into the world and work, depending upon their own exertions and taking their chances, would our civilization be more than a mere name.

Monica had turned a somewhat wooden countenance toward them, and listened absently, feeling herself in no wise concerned with the progress of civilization or any grand and impersonal theme. But now, in the gray isolation of her life on shipboard, every word and intonation of those zealous speakers recurred to her vividly.

When she told Pater, it was rather long that he sat motionless, his head on his hand, his face turned aside, before he responded tranquilly:

"It is well, my dear. It is best."

Beyond this there had seemed nothing whatever to be said between them. She could

only stroke and kiss his frail old hands in silence, and both were thinking he would be gone before she would come again. Would she, indeed, ever come again? Suddenly her heart grew chill and faint, too weak for its burden, afraid under the anguish of parting. Was life but one eternal farewell?

“Pater — tell me — is it worth while?”

Tranquilly the old man spoke:

“I hope, I may perhaps say I believe, that nothing is in vain. But this I know: courage is always worth while.” After a moment he added: “Our friend Balzac says: ‘Courage is life.’”

That was all; but she was ashamed to falter when his spirit, despite loneliness and the tottering, lamed body, ill with the dreary ills of age, still held itself upright, so they sat quietly together until she rose to go.

He did not lift up his voice and weep, — it would have been, indeed, a poor, piping little voice to lift! He did not bless rhetorically, like a biblical patriarch. But both knew well she was to him the last dear thing on earth, and no Abraham or Jacob ever blessed more mightily than he as he pleasantly remarked he should enjoy her letters, and often look after her mother. For the last time,

with his very palpable decorum and a grace triumphant over pathological accidents, he limped beside her, down the long hall, led her by the hand across the threshold and out on the porch. Looking back, she drove down the winding avenue through the park. As long as the dear old house remained in sight she saw the little black figure at the door.

Lost in endless retrospection as the ship ploughed on through the gloom, Monica rarely gave a thought to the shores she was approaching, was curiously devoid of interest in her future. What did that matter now? She was strong. She would probably live her weary threescore years and ten. She should work. Keith had said she must work. He told her work would be her blessing, and he swore he should care for every word, "merry" or otherwise. As he thus rashly engaged himself to plenary indulgence for all her future literary misdemeanors, he had smiled suddenly, and given her a loving look of half-amused, half-regretful apology and deprecation. He never, never would consent to her going instead of him, except he knew it was for her happiness, he had assured her firmly. "You will work. You will learn to love the life over there. It has a marvellous

charm, believe me. And it is always harder for the one who stays behind," he added low, his face stern and gray, as if carved in granite — But where she was to work, where all this blessing and happiness awaited her, neither Keith nor any other person, she least of all, had decided. That was quite unimportant. The one essential thing had been that she who loved them more than life must flee as from a pestilence from them who loved her no less. Why? Her presence caused them pain and fear. She could not continue to consciously hurt them. This was clear. Therefore she had gone forth. But why did they suffer so? Because the world forbade her to love Keith Lowell. Why? Ah, the answer to that Why she had not yet grasped. Nothing was ever less clear to her. It began presumably in the fire mist and birth of worlds, in the gray dawn of history. Among the many agitated voices of the swaying mob which composed her personality was one quite cool and haughty, that said, "We will examine this question; we shall have time."

In her sombre misery, one torture was spared her — doubt of the expediency of her course. Her decision once made, she had regarded it as the decree of fate. As her

love, so was her abnegation — inevitable. Except for brief relapses, there was no more storm, no rebellion in her heart. On the other hand, she was sustained by no consoling thought, no sense of duty well met, no perception of fleeing from evil, no glimmer of self-approval. In respect of the morality of her action, her conscience was passive to the verge of torpor, and her spirit lingered in its lost paradise.

But even seventeen days on an Atlantic steamship come to an end. The Scilly Isles retreated — biding their time. The owners of the five honorable names emerged, radiant and enterprising, from their seclusion, and with true distinction of manner chaperoned Monica down the gang-plank. They told her they had had half a mind to land at Havre, in which case she would have gone with them to Paris — or to Pekin, provided her money had held out. Whether she looked upon pagodas or pyramids or steppes, jungles or staid town parks, whether the men she saw were yellow, brown, and wild, or white, and, as it happened, very tame, humanity and nature would have seemed to her, in that apathetic mood, equally remote. She went aimlessly along a beaten track where amiable

compatriots expected her, met her, smoothed her path and sent her on, after days or weeks, like an express parcel of value by special messenger. They gave dinners for her at which she seemed to do all that was required in the way of animation, as much, perhaps, as her neighbor; she had acquired a certain routine in dinners. They took her to drive, showed her monuments, did not remark that they were entertaining but a part of her—her shell. The world demands, in truth, depressingly little of our real selves, and is rather relieved when those shy dwellers in our sanctuaries keep well out of sight. Moreover, the hospitable and gay world where Monica was passing cherished a certain tolerance for writers as for other incurables. Knowing them to be by no means always amusing, it charitably assumed that they were deep. Hence, having heard by chance of her venture in "merry art," they did not simply call her dull, but attributed to her vast designs upon the stored-up knowledge of Europe, and boundless interest in her own intellectual development. Hence with her they discussed even the time of day and the weather. Even the imputation of learning she took quietly, and never even smiled—

until later. Later, too, she felt twinges of remorse for the stony ingratitude with which she had accepted countless attentions and amenities. Later, without revisiting great pictures, she found that her weary, indifferent gaze had yet seized and stowed away haunting, vivid memories of their undying loveliness. But at that period she was numb to all things except music. Music swept away every shred of her factitious self-possession, and left her a helpless, broken, quivering thing. In all the great love stories on the stage she perceived traces of herself and Keith, yet always in unison, in blessed action, suffering, struggling, triumphing or dying together — or one for the other. Nowhere did a loving woman simply go quite prosaically off alone. In that theme, indeed, was no story, no romance, no thrill. Every day, everywhere, in bitter grief, men and women were parting quietly — poor things — poor things!

So Monica plodded on, possessed for the most part with that immense heavy patience which in natures destined to suffer much follows cataclysms of emotion. It did not occur to her that she had a broken heart. That organ beat with undeviating regularity. Her

cheek was not pale, her step not languid, and the surprising stability of beds on land induced dense and refreshing sleep. Whatever the fairies at her cradle withheld, they had bestowed upon her the boon of sweet, sound health which frequently serves as a perfect mask. Slight but chronic dyspepsia, the depredations of neuralgia, are apt to impart to our countenances a more touching melancholy than do the woes of love. Yet as she journeyed on, self-contained, conventionally shielded, quiet and proper in her well-fitting gown, she would have sacrificed ruthlessly the glowing canvases and white glories of their galleries, their crown jewels and the wealth of their treasure-vaults, the priceless lore of their dim libraries, all that she perceived of beauty and power, for the clasp of two arms in an arbor.

She would have toiled in the vineyards with Keith, or gone barefoot with him along country ways, and laughed like the careless vagabonds she envied, or sat with him like the maids and their sweethearts, unblinking, arms intertwined, in a crowd, yet alone — on a bench in a public garden — or begged, or broken stones on the road with him. With him — her heart's desire.

One winter noon it happened that she stood in a park and idly watched the play of a great fountain in the sunlight. It was a hilly country, and spoke to her vaguely of her northern home. "I have come far," she thought. "I have gone by people as a lost child in a dismal wood goes by trees. I have passed miles and miles of strangers. I have met only Nils — Hans and the cuddling little girl." The strong rush of water held her in thrall. It had proceeded by hidden ways, it burst forth briefly, joyously, mightily, leaping high, scattering foam in the sunshine, singing its marvellous song of the triumph of life. Monica regarded it wistfully, uncomprehending, yet feeling its gladness, its force.

"I am tired. I will stay here for a while. As well here as anywhere."

V

A PALE man with refined features sat stooping over a much littered desk and writing with rapid nervous hand for more than an hour, when a maid with a tray appeared.

"Already seven?" he said, glancing at his watch. "Thank you, Berta."

His way of thanking every fellow-creature who did him the smallest service was specially his own, never a mechanical response, but in each case a fresh recognition of direct personal kindness and a cordial tribute to the human dignity of the servitor.

Berta rejoiced daily in that "Thank you."

"We don't expect it, of course," she would philosophize to her colleagues, "but if ever we get it, we are mighty glad. Now, when the Herr Baron looks up every morning, always a little surprised, with those good, clear eyes of his, I could forget that he was a great and learned man, and think it was just a good child whose tea I was bringing, except for real goodness. There never was a child so

sweet-tempered and so little trouble as the Herr Baron."

"Leastwise, not his own two," some aggrieved voice would retort.

"If the Herr Baron would remember to drink his tea while it is hot," the maid now ventured to suggest.

"Yes, yes, Berta, certainly," he replied, his head buried in his papers.

She poured out some tea.

"If the Herr Baron would not forget—"

He looked up pleasantly.

"I am a doctor, Berta."

"If the Herr Doctor would please drink it now—" she persisted, glancing with disapproval at a broad sofa upon which rugs and cushions bore marks of unpremeditated bivouac—"yesterday the tea was left, the bread hardly broken. The Herr Doctor eats nothing at all, and as for sleep—" she shook her head ominously at the sofa.

"It is not so bad as all that. Sister Seraphina often brings me a stirrup cup, and my patients are continually gorging me with good things, I assure you."

He got up, stretched his bent back and cramped legs, his face contracting slightly as from pain, took the cup and drank it half out,

standing. With a roll in his hand he began to pace his study.

The room was large, dim, and disorderly, — a place where a few things were continually coming in and nothing ever came out. Hence prevailed an inevitable plethora of furniture selected by diverse minds; of painted, embroidered, and beaded offerings which would have delighted the soul of a squaw; provocative foot-stools and glaring rugs, fashioned by idolatrous but inartistic women; gaudy home-made vases, which another man would have shattered forthwith; match-safes, watch-cases, and portfolios; innumerable knickknacks constructed of cotton velvet, cardboard, and straw, glued, pasted, and tortured into shapes that never were on land or sea, not good to look at, not good for fuel, not good to eat.

But easily counterbalancing this ruffraff were many things that seemed to belong by good rights to the man who walked about among them eating his bread like a schoolboy. Some choice pieces of old mahogany opposed their ancestral dignity to the swarm of ephemeral trifles. Alcoves filled with books from floor to ceiling, — scientific works, classics, modern literature, in many languages; glass cabinets of instruments, glass tables, strewn

with delicately murderous blades; large globes, a couple of which were astronomical; telescopes, microscopes; and an array of retorts, queer-shaped jars; and flasks that might have sufficed for a Rosicrucian. A good copy of Murillo's Saint Anthony of Padua hung near the desk, upon which stood, strongly lighted by the one light burning, a tall statuette, a hooded monk, his finger on his lip. On a bracket was the pretty boy extracting a thorn from his foot. From a dim corner an Eros in marble looked down on all this chaos, and was hardly more serenely remote from his surroundings, more purely chiselled in feature, than the man with the bread.

Upon a large palisander table, a Christmas offering from a grateful old man, an alabaster vase—good of its kind but wholly out of place—reared itself obtrusively. Two thankful patients had sent it from Italy. Near by, an album displayed his monogram and coronet worked in green and gold. He stopped an instant, lifted a straw framework ornamented with patches of linen forget-me-nots of aniline hues; within the mechanism was a ribbon painted, alas! by hand, and recording amid flowery scrolls and numbers the days of the week and month. It was inconceivably

ugly, but that could be pardoned had the thing worked. As he put it back on the palisander table and under the wide-spreading vase and near the green and gold album, the slight irony of his raised eyebrows and flitting smile merged into thoughtfulness, for he remembered the innocent devotion of the fifteen-year-old girl who had designed this horror after a half-year's painful illness, in which she had clung to him pathetically and had otherwise little help.

"If they would not always seek to materialize their affection," he thought. "Affection is so good. I at least cannot afford to reject an atom that may reach me. But if they would not express it in slippers worked in Berlin wool, in beaded pen-wipers and other atrocities. It would be more restful if they would be content with the significance of a word, a grasp of the hand, a flower. Still — it is atavism, I presume — the recurrence to barbaric ornament and frippery. I might build a villa for all these things, or a fine mausoleum, or pile them up in mosaics like the bones in the vaults of the Church of the Capuchins. But what matters it if my study gets overpopulated? and why should I arrogate taste superior to that of the patient compilers of

straw and beads? From some higher point of view the difference between us may be quite imperceptible. At all events, I know what to do with their slippers. And that is good, for probably no man on earth ever got so many as I — except perhaps some popular clergyman; and no man ever had less use for them, for I am always booted. Ah, yes, I can manage the slippers. They walk off fast."

Three minutes sufficed for his perambulatory breakfast. He wrote a half-hour more, when two little boys in broad collars ran in and bade him good morning. He turned to them with a cordiality so affectionate and winning, it would seem to indicate the freest and sweetest relationship between father and sons. But the dark little faces wore a sullen or shy expression; their eyes did not meet his with candor, but glanced furtively with a *fauve* gleam beneath drooping lids and the sweep of thick lashes.

"My theme book, please, papa."

"Directly, Egon. Bodo, what's the matter? Out with your tongue. Headache, eh? Stomach queer?"

"He stuffed. He got into the pantry. He ate up all the jelly there was left."

"Let him speak for himself."

Bodo hung his head, twisted a button and said nothing.

"And you, Egon? You abstained, I presume? Avoided the pantry? Resisted the jelly?"

"Oh, he," began little Bodo, but checked himself in response to one pregnant look from his older and stronger brother.

"Well, Bodo, you 'll have to take the consequences of your raid on the pantry. You 'll survive this attack, my dear. But a headache is not a nice thing to take to school, and my boys, from all accounts, need no curb on their ambition. Egon, this Latin is scatter-brained work. What made you so careless, dear boy? There was no new rule. You 've had all that."

He put his hands on the child's shoulders, and looked down kindly upon the sulky little fellow, who muttered:

"The house was full of chattering people and all the doors were open. That Charity Ball Committee—it meets here all the time," he flung out viciously. "I did n't know where to go. It was cold in my room. I got in the dining-room bay-window behind the curtain, but mamma and Count Arco came in and spread out books of engravings on the table and talked about costumes, and giggled so"—

"Never mind that, Egon. We won't blame all creation when we go wool-gathering and forget our *oratio obliqua*. Ring for Berta."

"I thought the children's play-room was always warm, Berta? Please see that it is always in readiness, that they may work there undisturbed."

"It was stuffed full—skirts and feathers and things," grumbled Egon.

"I could n't find my stamp album," whined Bodo.

"Some boxes were put there hurriedly, sir, stuffs and models for the costumes, sir —"

"Ah, quite so; but—but that is exceptional. Kindly see to it, Berta— When have you to hand in your theme, Egon?"

"To-morrow."

"Then you have sufficient time to correct it. I have marked the worst mistakes with a cross in the margin. What they are you can find out yourself. Leave the book on my desk again to-night. You will try to do it better this time, won't you, Egon?"

"All right," said the boy, relenting and losing for an instant his expression of deep personal injury. "But we have Greek Exposition to-day." Gloom and wrath again settled upon his countenance.

"Well, so have the other boys," returned his father, cheerfully. "It was not invented for your exclusive annoyance. Put it on my desk to-night with your Latin. It is about time for you to start, little men. Don't be too hard on your masters. On Sunday afternoon I'll try to find time to take you out somewhere."

"Oh, papa, you always say that!" cried Bodo, with a pessimistic air.

"Bodo, you have dislocated that button. Just ask Berta to sew it on for you quickly."

"May I go in the tram, papa?" asked the child, with suffering mien.

"No, sir. You are not so debilitated as all that. You trot on your good little legs."

He smiled encouragingly at them and sent them away. But as the door closed behind them his face grew grave, his heart heavy. He was conscious they had not the air of young things expanding in the sunshine. They looked anæmic and nervous, — their inheritance from both sides of the house, — they were not frank, not joyous. From their professors he heard only bad reports. That they did not lead their classes was a matter of indifference to him, but the absence of goodwill and cheerfulness, their misanthropic

attitude, — all this was deplorable. They were not happy, had not what their natures needed. Yet what could he do? How could he devote more time to them? But if he could take them off for a year, and live with them in the woods and among the mountains. Would that not smooth the suspicious irritability from their faces? Then they would fall back a year in their already unsatisfactory schooling; not that he cared for that, but Church and State made such demands on the youngsters. If they were not confirmed at the usual age, if they did not pass their first examinations at the customary time, they would be at a decided disadvantage later. In all these matters prevailed a certain constraint, in respect of which he had his own opinions. But to go away with them would be impossible. When could an overworked man realize such a dream? Until August or September he could never get away, and then but for a short rest; was, moreover, at first usually in such a state of physical and mental exhaustion that he had to tend himself as if he were his own baby, and had not strength enough to teach a dog to sit up and beg. What his boys needed was the right sort of freedom, the right sort of attention, space for the happy

development of their own individuality. Should he send them away to school? But there they would be still more shy and strange than at home. Beside, he believed in the institution of the family. He smiled drearily. To preserve even the semblance of it, he had made and would make every sacrifice. No, he could not send the little boys away. For their own sakes, for his sake, for the sake of all. A tutor in the house? It was so difficult to find the right influence. They came home from school late in the afternoon, and must do their work themselves. It was not too long or difficult, if they would take it cheerfully. A tutor, were he a paragon of wisdom, tact, and happy qualities, would have almost nothing to do except in the odd hours. His salary would, moreover, pay for more beds in the hospital, and his presence would be a confession of weakness on the part of the family. Weakness? What was it, then, but weakness, this inability to cope with two children of eleven and ten years of age?

Yet for other men's children he seemed often able to suggest the right course. Other men's children met him with the glad welcome he had never the happiness of seeing in his own boys' eyes. In the street, wherever he

passed, strange boys, poor boys, orphans marching two by two in their gray uniforms, responded frankly to his smile, were ready to chatter gayly to him. And other men were busy. Few professional men could devote much time to their children. But few knew them well, studied them intimately, if the truth were told. Sometimes this method or want of method turned out well enough. Sometimes in a crisis a father was confronted by the sad fact that his son was an utter stranger. Still other fathers, the majority of his acquaintance, stood nearer their children, and he himself stood nearer to their children than he stood to his own,—on freer, more familiar and satisfying terms. Wrong was done those two little morose boys, wrong in divers ways. But what was remediable? How could he give them more sunshine? For he loved them well. How remove Egon's unceasing sullen, suspicious protest against the world at large—perhaps against existence itself? And Bodo was not unlike him, merely more of a baby. Such protest, was it, then, not logical and legitimate? Was the wrong deeper, more deadly, than mere faults and omissions in daily training? That ineradicable wrong, must one not seek it a

dozen years since? Were there not crimes unrecognized by our clumsy complex codes, and encouraged indeed by all our great moral institutions, yet no less cruel than murder? Must not every thoughtful man ask himself if the bestowal of life under certain conditions was not almost as monstrous as its removal?

He pressed his hand upon his breast, where such thoughts always created a corresponding physical oppression.

"This will never do, — with three operations awaiting me at the hospital, two of them serious. I must certainly take the boys a long walk on Sunday afternoon." But he did not.

He hastily drank the cold tea left in his cup, laid the scattered pages of his article in a drawer, jotted down a few memoranda in his note-book, slipped a case of fine instruments into his pocket, took the orders from the telephone book in the hall, answered personally a few frantic appeals, put on a sable-lined coat which a servant was holding in readiness, and left the house to begin his day's work. On his face was a thoughtful serenity which his friends declared so restful that it was sufficient in itself to cure any ordinary illness, and which his enemies called "that insufferable composure."

It was hardly more than eight o'clock when his coupé drove up to the portals of a large airy building well set back in a garden on the corner of two quiet streets. From the moment his foot crossed the threshold his bearing became erect, his expression more spirited. The very sight of those long rows of windows was like the bugle-call to the war-horse. This was his chief field of action, and he loved it. Here fruitless brooding and weary speculation had no place. In spite of disappointments, baffled hopes, the ceaseless symphony of pain, and the ignorance and impotency of science before many evils, was yet here the clear and triumphant record of the progress of human knowledge through human patience, of health restored, useful lives prolonged by feats of surgery unknown to our forefathers. When, indeed, no rescue was possible for a doomed mortal but by the one chance, — the fatal two-edged knife, cruel but kind, — and that one chance failed, it was poor consolation to reflect they would do these things better a hundred years hence, and know how to save even a patient the fountains of whose being were poisoned. On such days it cost him more effort to banish from his face the deep questioning of his soul. But it was relief and

blessing that his cool intelligence, his keen eye, his fine intuition, and that marvellously sure hand bestowed in innumerable critical cases.

The janitor straightened and brightened as the doctor passed. A couple of young assistants followed him into his private room. The matron and white-capped nurses looked every morning as if something especially fortuitous had taken place, and down the wards went the good tidings with a ripple of anticipation. When the great doctor and his young colleagues in their white linen coats, and a few students made their morning rounds a sudden alertness revived painworn bodies and tired minds.

"I have been in a hospital," Sister Seraphina often said to Sister Olivia, "where the patients shivered and shook at the sight of the Director, and we too hardly less,—not that he was cruel, only hard and forbidding in manner; but when Dr. Arenberg comes in I think it's miracles, for all my beds begin to look up like flowers after a summer rain, the private rooms as well as the wards."

The usual business passed rapidly. Instructions to the secretary, to the matron, the nurses, questions of diet and whims of first-

class patients. The brief time spent at each bedside never suggested haste, and the mere presence of one of the most nervous men on earth quieted the nerves of his patients.

A goodly number of people awaited him. A sturdy peasant met him with the announcement, so frequent that he no longer smiled at it:

"Doctor, I have long wanted to insult you."

"Not on your own account, I presume."

"No, Doctor, I must insult you about my wife."

"I am always proud of my master," exclaimed young Fleming after the third operation, "but, upon my word, he has worked to-day with an — elegance — with a verve — with a —" he waved his hand eloquently.

"Where in the deuce does he get his strength?" demanded one of the new-comers. "Why, he's got the hand of a woman."

"He is one bunch of nerves, man, perfectly under control. They described that last operation in three columns of 'Figaro' as the masterpiece of a Paris surgeon. I've seen Dr. Arenberg perform it three or four times a week, and go off with that quiet air of his, as simple as a child."

The whole corps of assistants and nurses

had worked with precision, yet as the doctor drove away from the hospital he regretted that he was starting on his visits an hour too late. From house to house he occupied himself unceasingly with his memoranda or reading, for his coupé carried a generous supply of newspapers, reviews, and books, not exclusively scientific, but modern English and French of best quality.

Sister Seraphina, hastening along the corridor with a nice little luncheon for him, had been accosted and detained two minutes by a convalescent relearning to walk. In these two minutes he had given his last orders and rapidly left the house, but a glass of wine and a biscuit he accepted somewhere along his route.

His patients were that morning, as usual, of high and low degree. From a palace where a little princess looked up affectionately at him he drove to a poor bookbinder's, whose child was also down with scarlet fever. She too was patient and good and trustful, like the king's daughter; and king and anarchist were alike anxious, and the fever took its course and was no respecter of persons. Nor was the doctor, who stayed longer, however, at the bedside of the bookbinder's daughter, and brought her a bunch of violets, and chatted with interest with

the father, a gentle creature with fierce theories, who had recently lost his wife.

Secrets of boudoirs, skeletons of cupboards, hidden springs of action, family griefs and fears, this quiet doctor felt with the pulses of his patients. Sometimes he asked himself if it were the fault of his profession or his personality that he was so vast a depository of family secrets. Not hysterical women alone revealed to him their misunderstood emotions, but practical men turned to him with their difficulties, to which he listened with the shrewdness of the attorney, the gentleness of the priest, and the gentle irony of the man of the world. He never took things tragically, never seemed to advise, yet in many houses in all critical moments was brother, friend, and selfless counsellor.

After a five-minutes interview with an old lady, the widow of an eminent professor whom he had known and liked, he said :

“Send for me sooner next time, I am always at your service.”

“I cannot bear to put one feather’s weight on you. I was ashamed to send at all. The attack was nothing new. I thought it would take care of itself. But it took care to repeat itself immediately, so I had no choice.”

He looked at her kindly. She was a sensible and good woman, cheery, practical, with energy and strength despite her years.

"The house is rather large and empty, is it not? Your life too solitary. You are used to thinking of others. It has kept you young. You will grow old too fast to please me, if you have nothing to do. When do your sister and the children come?"

"Not until summer. It is rather lonely. I am getting to be an old gad-about and meddler in other men's matters. I am continually going to see somebody. But seeing too many people is not enlivening."

"No. I at least have never found it so," he agreed, gravely. "The Loring's are looking for a home for a young country-woman, they told me the other day. They speak very highly of her, say she is quiet and studious. Why could you not try the experiment?"

"Oh," she returned doubtfully, "a stranger in the house? And American girls are usually so restless, so exacting, so very lively."

He smiled.

"They say she is a nice girl. I've not seen her. Suppose you let Mr. Loring call with her? It will bind neither of you. If you

should find her at all sympathetic, I would advise you to let her come. A new interest and a modicum of caretaking are the best medicines I can prescribe for you."

"The young lady would feel flattered if she knew she was expected to serve as tonic for a stupid old woman."

"Ah, she may need you quite as much," he returned cordially.

Up and down long flights of stairs leading to poor garrets where overworked, underfed breadwinners lay sore stricken, while an injudiciously bountiful supply of children clamored for food, in luxurious homes where people were ill from sheer overfeeding and laziness, he made his way, everywhere kind and equable. But for his worldlings he drew from a good store of irony which he left outside when he crossed the threshold of the garret. The ignorance of the poor never wearied him, and when he had no time for his spoiled countesses, he would sit long with patients who could not pay, and showed them infinite gentleness and interest in their most trivial concerns.

Having made only the most pressing visits he reached home toward three. On account of the children's school the family lunched

at one, without regard to his extremely uncertain arrival. He seized without ceremony some cold meat and whatever he found on the sideboard. "Never mind that, Wolf," he said to a servant struggling to preserve decorum and set the table. "I'll picnic to-day."

"The Herr Baron always picnics," returned the man, disconsolately.

"How many are in the waiting-room?"

"Thirty-seven, sir."

One by one they came in with their troubles, their aches, their weaknesses and fears; more peasants who wanted to "insult" him; old men who confidently expected him to restore their lost youth; incredulous incurables, insisting they never before had anything of the kind; women who, upon being asked one simple question, always told from the beginning their endless, irrelevant, thrice-told tale; cripples; genteel persons; poor souls with loathsome complaints; haggard women with frail babies; old patients whom he could dismiss briefly; new ones requiring time and fine attention; while Wolf with the manners of a diplomat ushered them in strictly in turn.

For each the doctor had the same penetrating scrutiny, the same simplicity and unwea-

rying patience. And although he sat in a comfortable chair, except when he rose to use the stethoscope and to knock at poor mortal frames with his light, sensitive fingers, or to walk about and stretch his neuralgic legs, or wash his hands or open or shut a window, perhaps even a bricklayer on a strike might have deigned to comprehend that this too was work, — this concentration of one's faculties for the good of humanity, this flexible adaptation of one's best powers to the humblest needs of one's brother, this loving intuition and willing slavery.

"With this sort of heart trouble you can live to be eighty, you know, and die of something else," he said encouragingly to a young merchant. "Of course you must be a little careful and avoid over-exertion. Don't run to catch a train or a tram. Don't lift heavy things. Carry your cares lightly and don't overwork. It is all very simple, you see."

"I think I can do it," the other replied, cheerfully. "My business runs smoothly; my home is quiet and happy, so much so, I should be sorry to have to leave, you know, while the children are so young. Oh, yes, I can be moderate as a mill."

"That is right. Walk all you like. Be

much in the open air with your wife and babies. Eat regularly, avoid exhaustion, be rational, and you are good for decades yet — decades ! ”

As the young man, no longer anxious, but content, had left the room to return to his quiet and happy home, his adviser's gaze rested with a certain sphinx-like sweetness upon the dark and mournful figure of St. Benedict. A door leading into the reception-rooms opened, interrupting his reverie, and a pretty little woman, dark, slight, and sharp-featured, rustled in.

He rose inquiringly.

“Wolf said you were alone,” she began. “Aurel, I hope you are not forgetting?”

“That I have not seen you to-day?” he returned, politely.

She shrugged her shoulders and gave him a furtive side-glance, like Egon, whom she resembled.

“It is the Arcos' Thursday.”

“I must admit that stupendous fact had escaped my memory. I fear it is impossible for me to go.”

“Aurel! You say that every time. You have not been there all winter!”

“But to other places,” he returned, quietly.

"Few enough. What will they think? What will other people think?"

"My dear Mélanie, if we begin to ask what the others think, I assure you I rarely have time to find out what I think myself, which interests me far more."

His calm voice, his way of examining his memoranda as he spoke, irritated her exceedingly.

"But it is too pointed," she cried, "exactly now, when we are occupied continually with the Charity Ball preparations."

He looked at her thoughtfully and was silent. There was a certain amount of reason in her argument. Count Arco was a gallant man, with nothing on earth to do but to amuse himself. Never dangerous, he fluttered, flirted, and flew on to the next flower. If not him, Mélanie would dangle some other amiable shallow pate at her girdle. Still now and then the world, that fashionable world with the tenets of which he was not in sympathy, demanded a visible marital sanction for such intercourse. If he, the busy doctor, walked through the Arco rooms once with her, she could amuse herself for weeks in her own way. Curious idea, that! He had long ago made up his mind that since they could not unite their aims, he

must do his own work, which, small as it seemed in comparison with the need that appealed to him on every side, was better worth doing than to dance attendance on his wife in drawing-rooms. He believed, moreover, that she had a right to choose her mode of life, even this that fascinated her and in which she knew no satiety.

But as he saw the sullen exasperation on her face, the face of Egon's mother, a vague self-reproach oppressed him as when his boys had stood before him that morning. She was no happier than they, than he. She could not be other than she was. They were yoked together for life, and at no point did their spirits meet. Yet somewhere was a wrong—to her also—since she was not happy. What more could he have done, could he still do, except to sacrifice his profession, to content her?

Something in the pose of the head, the averted gaze, the bitterness of the mouth, reminded him of his first meeting with her,—an August noon, thirteen or fourteen years before, a long hotel stairway, a mother and daughter coming up, he descending. The girl, sixteen or seventeen, apparently tired and warm, suddenly thrust her umbrella and a parcel into the mother's hands. It had amused him that

the mother, without remonstrance, accepted the additional burden; and he had not viewed the incident from a pedagogic point of view. Afterwards he had forgotten the bit of school-girl ill-breeding, for Mélanie could be piquant, elf-like, and untiringly gay. But now he remembered that the mother took the umbrella as she took all impertinence, petulance, and tempers from her daughters, and gave no answer except, at times, in kind; and gave no help or guidance, and craved the hollow things they craved, and none better. And because it seemed to him that Mélanie's selfishness was a disease, nurtured from the start as gout is fed with sugar, he looked now at her speculatively, wistfully, as upon a patient whose case is chronic, yet for whom he fain would find some magic cure. Beside, with another man she might have become a different woman. Another man she might, perhaps, have loved. Such thoughts, and vivid, repellent pictures of the past, flitted through his mind drearily, hopelessly.

In all his personality, which through no fault of her own or his she found unsympathetic,—for she liked dancing men, not scholars; and chattering men, not thinkers; and men who trifled elegantly, not men ardent

and tenacious in work, — nothing vexed her more than the mild and enigmatic gaze of those clear eyes.

“I did not marry you to sit in the house and spin, Aurel!” she exclaimed, sharply.

“I know you did not,” he returned, calmly.

“Orla says—”

“It is better not to invoke Orla in our private matters,” he answered, his voice striking a deeper note.

She retorted still more sharply than before bitter, querulous words, and once she stamped her foot.

He looked at his watch. One of her scenes was apparently beginning. Beside being a horror to him, it might absorb more time than the reception. Three patients he had promised to see that evening. He must also cast one glance at the last woman operated, must go a half-hour by rail to a rather fiendish but pitiable old woman who had frightful convulsions of laughter and screaming, and was inclined to slay her attendants if he failed to appear when expected. No other person had the least influence on her, but him she in a measure obeyed. However, she peremptorily demanded him three times a week. It was an exhausting and somewhat depressing pilgrim-

age, but a desire to protect her timid relatives, beside certain associations of the past, together with a queer sympathy with the unreasonable old party, who had been a famous beauty in her time, and clever, induced him to perform this quasi constable service, and compel her to keep the peace.

Mélanie observed him closely. Their discussion was by no means novel. Both knew how it would end.

"They will not probably all die if they do not see you until to-morrow night," she said, with hard flippancy.

"To-morrow evening I shall be out of town in consultation, on the following evening also. Mélanie, if you cannot go alone to a house where you are so intimate—"

"I cannot," she declared with vehemence. "Exactly there, not. Besides, I go enough without you. It rouses comment. It does not look well. One might as well be not married, as married to a man who systematically neglects one."

"And you could not stay at home?" he asked, gravely.

"Aurel! Why should I stay at home?" she demanded.

"Since you think you cannot go alone," he

continued. "I will drive over with you at ten, go in with you, and slip away."

"Ten is too late," she complained; "far too late for their regular At Home."

"It is the best I can do for you," he said, and rang for Wolf.

"Just bring me a little soup and a bit of meat here, will you, Wolf, instantly, and ask the children to come here a moment; and have the coupé drive round. I must catch the 7.15 train. I shall be back at ten minutes before ten. Please have my bath and evening clothes in readiness."

At Count Arco's that evening Monica was standing by a plush portière as a Russian began to play Chopin's Concerto in F minor very beautifully. She had heard it so often in the music-room of the dear old house on the height above the bay. She passed unobserved under the portière and wandered on, too moved to listen to that music among gay women and florid officers. The adagio from Beethoven's *Pathétique* followed. Its passionate undertone sent her farther and farther from the large drawing-room, until, quite unnerved, she found herself alone in a small boudoir. She could still hear the piano, and all her past throbbled in those wonderful tones.

Presently the daughter of the house sang a small song in English, — the Countess Arco was American, — which made no demand whatever upon her emotions, and she was about to return to her friends the Lorings when she happened to intelligently perceive on the wall before her the object at which she had been blankly gazing, — an interesting old *relief* in ivory.

It represented Iphigenia in Aulis at the instant preceding the interception of the goddess — Clytemnestra and a group of women at the right, their mouths distorted with wailing; the warriors, Agamemnon apparently swallowing his grief; in the centre the gentle victim with bared young breast; just behind her, strongly poised with knife upraised for the fatal stroke, and nearest her, meeting her innocent tender broken gaze, Calchas and the other stately priest, splendid of raiment, bay-crowned, hovering over her with something officially mournful, deprecating, unctuous, suave in their attitudes and their long-bearded, handsome astute faces. She was absorbed in study of the yellow, time-stained ivory, the curious movement of all the lines as of growing trees or flames —

“They were the doctors of those times,”

remarked a mild voice in agreeable English at her side, the careful English of the educated foreigner. "That handsome old rascal in the foreground is telling her it will really not hurt her very much. Seventeenth century work, is it not?" he asked gently, sauntered on, and disappeared through a side door.

"Who is the man with the beautiful profile?" Monica asked young Loring, familiarly known as Lal, who joined her shortly after.

"Perhaps you mean me," said the boy, with an amiable grin.

"It is a different style of beauty from yours."

"Don't chaff. A man has no business to be beautiful. I have heard no end of girls say they do not like handsome men."

"That is fortunate," she returned, dryly. "Handsome men are rare."

"Come, I say! You don't really like beauty men do you? You don't think them dandies?"

"It was not a dandy, nor was —"

"I would rather have fifty thousand dollars a year than the nose of Apollo."

She looked silently at the *relief*. Among the strong aquiline faces was one not unlike the face she loved best.

"But your man with the profile. Was he in uniform?" resumed the boy.

"No. It does not matter at all. I merely happened to ask."

"It cannot be Baron Barotinsky. You can't see his profile for his cheeks and teeth and his flamboyant moustache—flamboyant is good. And Baron Lobanow has the distinguished profile of a bird of prey,—all right, you know, and racy,—but not what a young lady calls beautiful. Then there is old Baron von Uhlenhorst, major in times past. He has a profile ready for anything, but flattened as with a flatiron. I know you don't mean him. His gay son Leo, who flirts awfully with Miss McCarroll, and all the time looks after the main chance with the Countess Florence Arco—well, you surely can't mean him? Selbitz has a profile, but it all runs to nose."

"I mean no one at all. This was a man I never before saw. It is utterly unimportant. You are a dreadful gossip for a boy of eighteen."

"It cannot be old General Ehrenstein," he went on, quite unabashed. "He has a very honorable profile but it is sixty-eight years old. Those other fellows in there, there's nothing beautiful about them, unless it is their

impudence. The English ambassador — well, he may be awfully clever, but he has no more profile than I have.”

She still studied the ivory and let him prattle.

Once upon the trail, he would not desist.

“Profile — profile — man with a profile,” he muttered. “I know an actor with a profile.”

“This man was not an actor.”

“Prince Ruprecht has a profile, but he wears uniform. Beside, he is not here this evening, so far as I know. What did the profile condescend to belong to? To what sort of chap otherwise, I mean?”

“Lawrence, it was the merest accident that I asked you.”

“Yes, yes, but profiles must be attached to something,” persisted the boy. “They cannot walk about in thin air — unless they are astrals. Was this fellow an astral?”

“Quite possibly.”

“Miss Randolph, I must ferret out this mystery. Now, suppose there were a murder, and your profile were suspected, and you were witness, how would you describe him?”

She looked at the boy wondering, and answered:

“Since you insist, he is a man of middle height, slight, elegant, has good shoulders, and

moves well. His hand is unusual, perfect in shape, no flesh, yet not bony,—a sensitive hand, with faultless nails. The hand I saw plainly. As to the face—I hardly looked at him, you understand—he stood a little behind me, and spoke so simply—quite with my thoughts—so that it scarcely surprised me to hear a voice, and I met his glance only as he was turning to go; but I saw keen eyes, deep-set, color unknown,—a slight smile which I suspect is surface—light—an immensely thoughtful face, a noble air—repose. I hardly know how to express it, but as if he had nothing in the world to do all the time that there is—plain evening dress—no decorations; that is all I saw, except, as he turned away, the pure profile.”

“Great Scott! And that is the way girls purl on when they do not even look at a man! My dear Miss Randolph, I assure you I could not give you so minute a description of my own father. I should say he was an awfully good old chap in a gray coat. Or is it because you are an author?” the saucy boy demanded with his first symptom of respect.

“I am no author,” she retorted, with some discomfort. “I only happened to write something that they published.”

“Wait a bit. I’m after the classic profile. A man who looks as if he has nothing to do. A man who has all the time that there is. Profile — ah — I’ve got you! That heavenly repose can belong only to the great Arenberg. Oh, Miss Randolph, I am evidently a born detective. I shall have to tell my father it’s no use sending me to Freiburg to be a mining engineer. It is the famous Arenberg, as sure as you’re born.”

“Why is he so famous?” asked Monica, still studying the growing fibres and movement of the ivory.

“Well, of course I don’t mean he is famous like Buffalo Bill or Jimmy, you know. Still, he is a very good sort. Known here as a fine surgeon, and recognized in London. I say, you don’t like London, do you? Stupid, after New York. Arenberg is a very good fellow. So much I must say for him. They say he takes from the rich and gives to the poor. A sort of Robin Hood, you know, among doctors. Then he is a born baron, and drops his title. When a duke dislocates his arm and dares to call Arenberg, they say he has to sell a farm or forest of his ancestral estate. Arenberg is a socialist, an anarchist, a heaven knows what. All the same, he is

a swell, and the fashion. All the women in love with him, all the men depending upon him. A person of importance, don't you know?"

"He seemed so very simple," said Monica.

"Oh yes, they are sly foxes, doctors, don't you know? I say, you don't like doctors, now, do you? Sly foxes, doctors—frauds, you know."

"Oh yes, I like doctors," said Monica gently, turning away.

"All right," he responded, cheerfully. "Then I'll tell my father it is no use to try to make a detective of me. I must study medicine. I say, Miss Randolph; are you tired? because I intentionally forgot to tell you that papa, who was buttonholing an abbé in the seventh heaven of theological argument, told me I was not to hang about and bore you to death, but to say when you were tired he was ready to go home."

Arenberg had quitted the tempestuous old witch in Blüthenheim, returned to town, seen his most pressing patients and the woman at the hospital, reached his home ten minutes after ten instead of before ten, still in time to make a hurried toilette, and drive with a somewhat incensed wife to Court Arco's, whence he

beat a speedy retreat. The night was starry and cool. With a sense of relief he walked on through quiet streets. "For a tame man," he thought, "I have a singular hatred of crowded drawing-rooms. That thoughtful girl alone in the little room, watching her fair sister Iphigenia so wistfully, likes them no better, it would seem."

Wolf, sleepy but dignified, announced that the Gunthers had just telephoned three times. Somebody was badly burned. Wolf's manner expressed grave doubt of people's tact in mentioning such things so late at night.

Arenberg's coat was half off. He pulled it on again, went into his study, filled his pockets with a few things usually wanting in the best houses, and made for the hall door.

"The carriage, sir?"

"No. The horses must go over to Count Arco's once more. That is enough for them."

"May I not get a cab, sir? It is so far."

"Thanks. I can get up there quicker on foot, by cross paths."

On his return, very late, he passed a Volk's Hall, gay with the sound of violins and dancing feet.

"Lo, the poor working-man," he said, smiling, "may he get his eight hours!"

VI

No power on earth could have convinced Monica, at home, what a fair semblance of happiness two or three scrawled pages might create in a homesick heart. It was six months now since her Hegira, and Keith's letters came regularly. His zeal surprised himself, for no man disliked and shirked letter-writing more than he, and his correspondents in general were but meagrely informed by his strong and interesting personality. To her, however, he found himself writing freely; and some fugitive charm of his presence, and much of his good heart, crept into those small and hasty pages, breathing devotion, — a deep but unaccentuated sadness apt to deviate into jest, and never failing in the manliness of steady approval of her course.

When such a letter was due, every postman's ring was a peal of joy-bells, electric, inspiring. And that bit of paper! She kissed it until her eyes were dim with tears, and wept until she laughed for gladness.

Sometimes she would tear open the envelope ravenously; sometimes she turned it up and down, and over and over, gloating over the superscription and postage stamps, and stroked it with lingering touch, postponing essential delight with sybarite cunning. By day she carried his latest letter about with her; by night it lay under her pillow, and if she waked she touched it lovingly, was comforted, and slept again.

Mrs. Randolph's letters to her daughter were, upon the whole, better letters than Keith Lowell's, — longer, more frequent, most dear to Monica, and unspeakable sustenance. For these too she waited, these too she read and re-read tenderly; but it must be admitted she put them neatly on file, and did not blur them and rumple their edges by close contact with her person. For nature, which now and then leads the best of us a pretty dance, permits a girl to receive with perfect sobriety of demeanor the most loving effusions penned by the mother who bore her, while a word from the hand of a man whom she has known but a span of months whirls her off upon a series of actions, incalculable, idiotic, and rapturous.

Mrs. Randolph wrote in excellent spirits,

and with the sure hope of joining Monica soon and going with her to Italy, Greece, and farther. In the meantime a suitable tenant for the house must be found, for, obviously, one could not let it and its penates to the unknown first comer and his horde of wild children armed with jackknives. Mrs. Randolph alluded with vague and sanguine lordliness to certain speculations which should pave the way to a nomadic life of delightful and wide range. In her first letters she mentioned Keith briefly and kindly, making this concession to the situation; for many weeks she ignored his existence; toward spring she began to express herself oracularly, with veiled and anxious pleading, in regard to the influence of time and distance upon human hearts, the proverbial fickleness of lovers, the ephemeral and illusive character of woman's dreams, the transitoriness of all mundane things, and similar themes not wholly neglected by the poets, whom, indeed, Mrs. Randolph summoned, in copious quotation, to her aid. Monica, persuaded of the indestructibility of true love, smiled sadly over this eloquence, and did not suspect that it had a definite trend, or that anything further could be demanded of her after she had put

four thousand miles of land and sea between her and the man she loved. But one April day, when the air was bracing in the shade and enervating in the sunshine, and the earth was thrilled with unrest and pulsating with promise, and the mute souls of things were swelling and bursting, eager to fulfil their destiny, Monica received two letters; one, more than usually ardent, spring throbbing through it all; one, clever, carefully planned, breathing affection, reason, solicitude, and a mother's prayer for that mother's peace of mind, in the sacred name of mother-love, to make the one remaining sacrifice and give up all communication with Keith.

Monica, starting out to walk had met the postman at the door and taken those letters into the woods, where she read them many times. Always these two! Always the conflict! What subtle influence linked them so strangely together since that first night when he was summoned by her imperative need. Was it only from that night? Or did it all begin ages before, in some forgotten pre-existence? That letters from these dear protagonists should arrive not infrequently by the same steamer was no more than natural; but why, if Keith's was specially ardent, should

hers reveal an inexplicable aptness, a prescience, divining his thoughts and seeking to counteract their potency? Monica was conscious that her mother was not as the mother in comfortable love affairs, who amiably obliterates herself, or as that forgotten or disregarded nonentity, the average mother in fiction. This mother held her ground, untiring, resolute. Even her silence was eloquent with thought and steadfast purpose.

To-day her words were well chosen. Her arguments would have convinced every dispassionate reader. They impressed Monica profoundly, and filled her heart with the old hot tumult, the conflict of reason and emotion, of conscience and desire, of truth and sophistry. She had gained in these months no forgetfulness, but some control, some little quiet and patience. Again, all was swept away. By what? By a few written words, lifeless things, mere marks made with pen and ink on white paper, yet potent, as she sat there on a bench beneath a great linden-tree in a still game-park, where beautiful wild creatures lived that kings and dukes might slay them — to transport her to her old home, to reveal to her in the glow of flickering firelight a fair and troubled face yearning

over a girl wretched and broken in spirit, crouching at her mother's knee, and to re-voke from the silence the vivid sound of their voices, their sighs, each impassioned word distinct, living, and echoing on forever.

So still, so long Monica sat, the deer thought she must be a queer growth on the trunk of the linden-tree against which she leaned, and drew near and contemplated her with soft inquiry in their lovely eyes. For these were tame wild things, grown fearless because in a monarch's domains are many game-parks, and the royal massacre of these innocents occurred rarely, and only in its appointed time, like all court ceremonies, pageants, and diversions.

Be brave and good, her mother said. Finish nobly what she had nobly begun. To weakly cling to what she had renounced, to revel in the expression of emotion to a man from whom she had fled, had neither virtue nor sense.

Singularly enough, in these words threatening her last remnant of happiness, was something that appealed to Monica, who did not love half measures and compromises.

Her mother pleaded wisely, subtly, tenderly, Keith's cause against Monica herself. It was cruel to fetter a man to whom one

never could give happiness; selfish to possess his imagination still instead of summarily breaking off all intercourse, thereby helping him to regain his repose of mind and meet his duties manfully.

She pleaded well, the mother, and even though Keith's letter, already much crumpled and blurred, was pleading passionately against her, she might have won her cause but for one inadvertence.

"Social laws are for the good of mankind. No one can oppose them with impunity. Obey them and trust the future," she urged.

Trust the future! Those three words had at first no special significance to Monica, but as she read and re-read them, they became portentous. Behind them she perceived something lowering in ambush, — a vague figure, a Major Lynton or Kitty's "Prince." Again, yet more sharply defined, she saw, as on that evening long ago, one faint shade of worldliness in that pure affection, one hint even of selfishness in those incontrovertibly noble and moral views, and was dismayed, as we all are, when suddenly a stranger looks out of our nearest and dearest's eyes. Beside, the slightest manipulation of souls is a crime of

lèse-majesté which, the soul discovering, never condones.

Her mother was right, a thousand times right. Reason, logic, conventional morality, social laws, were all on her side, — always on her side. But not to these had Monica yielded. Ah, no! Not for these did she sit here alone in a foreign land. For Love's own sake had she fled from love. Her mother was right. But Keith and she herself, were they also not right? Had their love no rights at all, not even after their renunciation, — a right to this one last boon, the letters? Cold and pale, indeed, were they, compared with the human touch, the voice and smile of the unattainable beloved, yet warmer and dearer than all else on earth. Keith's letter became suddenly more crumpled and blurred, and her soft-eyed spectators scampered off, mistrustful of such conduct.

Her mother was good, but Keith, he, too, no less. Her mother was large-hearted and infinitely loving. But had any mother, even in thought, the right to dispose of her child's destiny? To seek to direct, if even so little, her affections? And the social laws condemning her and Keith? Were they so immaculate? Who made them? Whence did

they arise? They, too, would sanction her marriage with the "Prince" on the morrow. "Then they are low things," she said solemnly in the stillness, looking up into the intense blue of the sky and upon the noble and tranquil reaches framed by groups of oaks and beech-trees.

"Whom does our correspondence harm?" No one. There Monica was less honest, and some voice in her demanded how she knew this so positively, since certain matters were remote and beyond her observation and jurisdiction.

Sorrow has its rights, she thought, and loneliness and love in exile. If there were wrong in these letters, then her heart and thoughts, the very essence of her being, all was hopelessly wrong. Right? Wrong? How confusing were such words! For on this earth right clashed with right, and when the stronger was victorious the weaker right seemed then a wrong. She smiled bitterly. Social laws cannot undermine you, though I shake my puny fist. I never wished or sought to oppose you. I am but a weak soft thing, and, I believe, not wicked in my heart, not precisely an outlaw by election. But those letters, I will not yield. Can I do harm at

this distance! I might as well be writing to Lilian in the shades, he is so far — so far from me —

Spring was pleading for the lovers in her own pulses in Keith's letter, in the marvelous air, in all the mysterious yearning of nature, in the sweet call of the blackbird and the thrush, in the free flight of a far-off swallow. In a broad hollow the light breeze stirred a field of cuckoo flowers in waves of lilac foam, — a sea of bloom fair enough for the birth of Aphrodite, — and Monica, looking up, beheld the struggle of the great linden-tree bursting forth in myriads of tiny pale-green heart-shaped leaves — hearts, not heads. That night a message flashed under the ocean: *I cannot and live*. It was her only reply. In no letter to Monica did Mrs. Randolph, wise and loving, ever revert to the subject. She waited — loving and wise.

It happened about this time that Monica, to her exceeding amazement, found herself promoted to the dignity of an editorial chair. Since we are aware that life is a mere succession of surprises, it is surprising that we ever permit ourselves to be surprised, she reflected sapiently, the first morning that a courteous publisher sent her home from her

inarduous labors in his very correct coupé; nevertheless, great was her surprise, and she was conscious of being tossed about curiously, as if some higher power were idly playing at cup and ball.

A magazine of English excerpts had been plunging on rather headlessly since the death of the poet who had originated and conducted it. Gravely introduced by Mr. Loring, its publisher called upon her one day to offer her the editorship.

"The idea is preposterous," she declared, promptly. "I am not at all that sort of a person; I could never do it."

She was genially assured that her duties would be as small as her salary, that *The Nosegay* ran in grooves and under the guidance of trained men, but sadly needed somebody capable of rapidly dipping into all kinds of current light literature in the English tongue. For this sort of dissipation she could not deny a certain aptitude. But her stay, in all probability, would be so short. "At least, while you stay," begged the publisher. "Very well, while I stay," she agreed.

She had no reason to repent her decision, for stacks of English books, magazines, reviews, and journals were sent to her rooms, —

this rich prospect was indeed what tempted her, — and there was nothing of this sort which she could not have by adding its name to the already generous list. Whatever she desired in German or French she needed but to mention. She had also her own sanctum in a large publishing house, and the men on her staff, highly edified by the advent of a chief in petticoats, by her inexperience and meagre German, were exceedingly good to her, made all things easy, and did whatever they could of her work. Men, upon the path of this lone pilgrim, were not thus far, it must be conceded, monsters.

In the make-up of *The Nosegay* under Monica's dispensation certain things always remained a mystery to its editor-in-chief. It devolved upon her to choose for it a serial novel, short tales, essays, poems, and anecdotes. In this purely literary field she was autocratic. She was also supposed to select its illustrations. Now, the serial was illustrated and dear. The stream of literature flowing in to nourish the small magazine was enormous. It was altogether an expensive caprice of the publisher, who had a special fancy for this feeble, foreign reprint in the midst of his vast German enterprises of world-

wide fame. *The Nosegay* was never expected to prove remunerative, and in this respect certainly disappointed no one. But a certain frugality of mind Monica was, nevertheless, instructed to exhibit in her choice of illustrations. Unexplored piles of pictures which the publishers had been reproducing for a quarter-century in all sorts of periodicals, lay at her disposal. These coarse prints she was expected to make palatable by an engaging text. A limited supply of fine *clichés*, the best modern work from Paris and Sweden, were always at hand, and Monica was prone to toss the ugly pictures overboard, and fill one number of *The Nosegay* with fascinating things which she ought to have distributed through five. But whenever she permitted herself this liberty, some secret power curbed her flight. She might have read the proofs apparently at the last moment, and seen the blank pages left for the illustrations of her choice; but when the fresh *Nosegay* was handed her, a change had taken place in its landmarks: something beautiful had vanished, and in its stead was some rough print from the old store, something from Shakespeare, Schiller, it mattered not what, with a text that mattered, alas! still less, apparently.

At all events, terrible in bald detachment, in utter want of *raison d'être*, and crushing in the extreme to the editor-in-chief, passages which may well be reckoned to the most unexpurgated of Shakespeare, appeared once or twice in Monica's magazine.

Regaining breath and courage, she would reason:

"It makes one's hair stand on end, but perhaps they won't know what the words mean. I hope they'll not look them up in their dictionaries. After all, it is Shakespeare, fortunately. People never mind Shakespeare or the Bible — I don't know why, I'm sure. But I must never again be careless of those expensive *clichés*. I must work in those dreadful babies that look like advertisements of Mellin's Food."

Trusting too that he who fain would teach her economy by these heroic methods did not himself perfectly command the English tongue, like Sir Isaac Newton's little dog, did not know the mischief he had done; dreading, above all, the conscientiousness and thoroughness of the ordinary German mind in any explanation; this mean-spirited editor never dared to inquire who set at naught her scheme, but looked calm, grave, and entirely

preoccupied by business when next she met her associates.

Her Answers to Correspondents also caused her some pangs. Writing Answers to Correspondents can rarely be, it is safe to assume, enlivening employment. But until one perceives into how many forms of broken English Germans are capable of translating the *Lorelei* and the *Erlkönig*, one hardly suspects the potentialities of this office. She had at times forty or fifty such productions speared together on her desk. They were too precious for the waste-basket. Their perusal brought tears to the eye — tears of bewilderment and helpless mirth. But Monica found it difficult to express this fact pleasingly in her answers.

Altogether her connection with *The Nosegay* was healthful. It occupied her certain hours of certain days regularly, and forced her into a new field where she gained some discipline and a little technical training, and prevented her from thinking exclusively of her own affairs. Anything may, of course, become drudgery, — munching bonbons, or swinging in a hammock, or kissing, — but Monica's gleanings in the best periodical literature never palled upon her. After making

her approximate table of Contents for weeks in advance, she would read ravenously on, with the fine consciousness of fulfilling her professional duties. Yet she was so thoroughly aware that her actual work on *The Nosegay* required no trained intelligence, she wondered to find it, too, propelling her farther in that path upon which invisible hands had long been pushing her.

There is truth and mystery in the proverb of the dog and his bad name. Why, if a woman be carelessly called pretty, another witty, another amiable, do the names often enough cling, though the suggested attributes be imperceptible? Thus Monica was dubbed literary, and literary she was doomed to remain till the end of the chapter, with how little reason she who knew her heart's desire fain would have persuaded the acquaintances who congratulated her upon her fresh laurels. "Why, a child could do such work," she assured the Frau Professor; but even that good soul did not believe her.

It was, indeed, wholly useless, Monica had long since discovered, to deny or deprecate literary capability. She was an "author" in spite of herself, and not altogether unlike the immortal individual who found that he had

been writing prose unawares. If she said she had no literary ambition, people smiled incredulously; if she seemed unconscious, as she was, of any talent or calling, they thought it pride aping humility; and it would have been hopeless to attempt to explain to any one that which was to herself utterly inexplicable and mysterious, — how in light response to the light bidding of a girl-friend, with the blithe audacity of ignorance, yet purely, since with no thought of the world's praise or censure, — like a shepherd lad who, unabashed, joins heroes at their sports and gayly flings his rustic crook amid the shower of glittering spears, — she had written that idle little tale, which had put her ever since in a false position. For although people are prone to believe that whatever publishers choose to print and bind, is — if it sells — literature, Monica had the grace to know better. She was, moreover, insensible to flattery in regard to a book which she suspected some being outside herself had written. While her hand, her pen, had visibly done the work, her brain and heart were frequently so remote and so heavy laden, she marvelled at the merriment of her manuscript. Confronted by the first deep problem of her life, impelled with elemental

force toward Keith, yet never long oblivious of her mother's pained and powerful remonstrance, she wondered at the indifference of those creatures of her imagination. How could they laugh and live untroubled lives? What were they? Whence did they come? Why did they jest when she was sad? In a certain sense the book was strange to her, — a bubble on the deeper current of her life. She forgot its existence completely, was frankly uncomfortable when suddenly reminded of it, and began to resent its cheap popularity and the unconscionable sales which, in the expressive language of Lal Loring, were still booming. Yet she had no reason to be ungrateful to that little venture. It had enabled her to act freely in a crucial moment. It had sent her abroad with one thousand dollars in her pocket. With this opulence she calmly faced the world and feared nothing, for she was not yet acquainted with money.

No woman, be she daughter, sister, or wife — and let her keep her accounts ever so prettily — who simply accepts and disburses what others have toiled for, is acquainted with money. Few, indeed, are acquainted with it, though its name is on every lip, —

not the idle inheritor of millions; not the miser; not the prudent person living genteelly on a moderate income; not the poor man; not the thief, the successful merchant, or the careless vagabond. Only when one longs to help and save sinking fellow-creatures with it, longs to rescue health or happiness or life or honor, watches the good going to the bad for want of it, gnashes one's teeth in powerlessness before the impossible, yet rises in wrath and dares the impossible, agonizes, assumes mad risks, staggers under heavy weight, descends into the arena and wrestles for it amid insult and jeers, and having won it scatters it broadcast, gladly, with both hands, knowing it for the thing it is, wholesome in the right place, and in the wrong vile and noxious, were that place the altar of the Great Unknown, — does one pass through the process of initiation into the occult knowledge of the mystery of money. For here, too, he who loseth his life shall find it, and there are things hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto dare-devils. In the legend, the kobolds of the mine become the cruel masters of him who, greedy for their gold, approaches them with flattering mien; but to the youth who commands them sternly,

treats them with contumely, buffets and derides them, they are willing slaves, and all their ingots of gold and silver, their ropes of rubies, their buckets of diamonds and pearls, are his. So in the legend of life — the fleeting vision we are all enacting — the soul who would command the hidden treasure of wealth must regard it, and its loss — haughtily. Some perception of these truths Monica acquired in the course of time. Many of them, indeed, are visible at a glance. When Dives, paying his cab-fare, handles his pennies with a certain scrupulously obsequious crook of the fingers, he proclaims loudly to the universe which is master, who is slave. But at this period she perceived little that was near her, because of the overweening presence of the green pastures and still waters she had left far behind.

One fact was, however, clear to her, indifferently as it pleased her to regard it. She was expected to earn her bread. This prospect, usually discussed in anxiety when a girl goes forth alone, had been almost altogether ignored by that faithful little group bent only upon getting her off anywhere, under any conditions, as fast and as far as possible, as if she were a keg of dynamite. The trifling

matter of bread-winning they seemed to think would take care of itself. Curiously enough, it did. Winged opportunities, which her betters pursued breathlessly round all corners, flew unsought in her windows. She received from a number of newspapers very fair offers for regular work, and feeling that an inscrutable providence assigned queer burdens to feeble backs, she patiently undertook to chronicle weekly, and at so much a column, her impressions of foreign life. Now what she chronicled was, in truth, everything and anything except her impressions. She possessed that evil thing, a facile pen. With it she wrote chitter-chatter upon ruined castles, and puerile liveliness about Nuremberg and Dresden, and gentle enthusiasm over peasants—in short, yards of merry trash. But often, as she sent off her copy, the person in her who loved books with true love and reverence would exclaim in indignant protest: "I wonder that they can stand another castle!" and it would have seemed to her not inappropriate had her editor, emulating the humane plea for the Western pianist, prefaced her weekly letter with the appeal: "Don't shoot the writer. She is doing the best she knows."

Monica was doing the best she knew. Pro-

jected, as from the cannon's mouth, from one continent to another, and from her own private and dear concerns into a perforce literary career, she adjusted herself so soon as she had recovered breath after the stunned condition resulting from these heroic methods of flight and of conversion, to her new environment. Inordinately influenced by reminiscences of other people's letters of travel, she innocently assumed it was her duty to prattle about castles and peasants, and Nuremberg the ancient, and Dresden the delightful. But what she herself observed, and thought, it never occurred to her to write — yet that might have had some slight worth. And had she inadvertently slipped one of her letters to Keith Lowell into an envelope addressed to the New York *Panyphone*, its readers might have been not a little surprised, — used as they were to sensations, — but at least they would have got their money's worth, perusing a human document. So poor Monica conscientiously sent to the printers the worst that was in her, and the world told her she was clever to earn so much money.

The fact that many men now desired to mould her mind ought perhaps to have convinced her that she was a writer.

Good old Mr. Loring was an ex-Presbyterian preacher who had sacrificed the fat emoluments of his drowsy parish to the convictions of conscience. Finding himself preaching dogmas which he no longer believed, he sadly resigned his calling, thereby enduring much obloquy and vituperation on the part of deacons unlike him, not tempted by thought, and by the local press, not like him over-troubled by scruples. He liked to dart into Monica's rooms of a morning while she was finishing her weekly yard for the *Panyphone*. Ostensibly he desired to look up a word in her Unabridged Dictionary; but presently he would seat himself, and anxiously inquire if she believed in the Immortality of the Soul. Monica, engaged upon her quasi-official report of the condition of a ruined castle, often succeeded in shirking this vast theme. But upon one occasion, he persisting, she behind time in her work, turned from a book in which she was nervously verifying her architecture, — which, unless supported by good authorities, was apt to totter, — looked over her shoulder at Mr. Loring, and flung at him the unpremeditated statement that she did believe in the immortality of the soul, if perhaps, in a large and re-

mote inexplicable sense; in the meantime, if she personally knew that she should merge in the next stage of her being into a flower, or a gas, or a flame of fire, it would seem to her a matter of utter indifference.

Whereupon Mr. Loring, astonished, ejaculated:

"Upon my word, I'm not sure but that is faith!"

She, over her shoulder, from her desk, responded:

"At least, it does not dictate to the Almighty."

The heterodox boldness of this sentiment seemed to please the ex-Presbyterian, and to lead him to take a special interest in Monica. He privately wondered that the New York *Panyphone* printed her articles and rejected his, but he was far too kind-hearted to hold her accountable for the editor's want of discrimination, and benevolently undertook to improve her mind. She was only too willing. She really hoped something in this line might be accomplished for her. She had heard of young writers protected and advised by men of light and leading, and in spite of her sense of irresponsibility toward her firstling, and toward her perfunctory work for the *Pany-*

phone, and her playing at editing *The Nosegay*, she could no longer refuse to perceive that the world—that is to say, the people whom she met—attributed these various misdemeanors to her alone. Hence she honestly desired to learn something of the trade she found herself practising without having served her apprenticeship. When Mr. Loring looked quizzically at her and remarked he never had occupied himself with novels and poetry,—of course those were toys for women,—but it would be singular if a trained theologian and practised writer could not be of service to her, she agreed with him heartily in a frame of mind sincerely docile, receptive, and hopeful of good. He had, it appeared, devoted his leisure in Europe to what he chose to call the study of art. He observed, with great justice, that there was no “art” whatever in her little book, and none in her letters to the *Panyphone*, not even one allusion—here he looked at her reproachfully—to Michael Angelo or Leonardo. To this assertion Monica assented cheerfully. She spent hours examining his engravings and etchings, which interested her much, and in listening to his dissertations, which, she was grieved to discover, interested her precious little. For a

knowledge of art, according to his interpretation, consisted in committing to memory interminable lists of painters' names and the dates of their births and deaths with a chronological catalogue of their works. Such lore was upon the whole less entertaining than a biblical genealogy. He would divide an artist's life into sections, and while it obviously gave him keen pleasure to proceed from firstly to twelfthly, Monica perceived with regret that all these disquisitions could never help her to learn her trade, not even to suppress one superfluous "and which." Not finding her zealous, he gradually relinquished his endeavors, wondering still more at the *Panyphone*.

But among the pictures he showed her was one of which he was unconscious: a gray-haired man with boyish ways; charity in his heart; unfailing tenderness to an invalid wife; boundless indulgence to those lively and expensive youths, his sons; blind idolatry for his little daughter; amusing stories on his lips and wistfulness in his eyes; a soul homesick alike for the old parish and the old faith, wrenched from both too late in life ever to take root elsewhere, longing always for the ancient landmarks; a gentle spirit

whipped by merciless self-reproach; doubting systematically and on principle, yet with the old ingrained orthodox horror of doubt; reading modern science with a sense of wrongdoing, and a half suspicion that the personal devil with hoofs and forked tail was at the root of the whole matter.

This portrait Monica found touching, and was always studying faithfully and with close sympathy. It was, indeed, a subject made for her hand, or for a better one. But as it did not occur to her to write what she herself really saw and felt, she continued to babble about castles.

The next person who attempted to improve her intellect was a lawyer from Massachusetts. He told her solemnly, and with distinct dissatisfaction in his eye, that he regarded her work as promising, — very promising, indeed; it was crude, of course; no one could expect her to have, all at once, the experience of, say, an old lawyer like himself; but there was a certain freshness in her touch; very unlikely that that freshness would last, it was not, indeed, an essential quality; in order to become a serious writer she should subject her mind to steady discipline. — Monica now pricked up her ears, was ready to

subject herself to the severest course of mental gymnastics, and rejoiced that the royal road to learning was about to reveal itself to her. — Now, he went on, he thought he could be of real service to her. He had come up expressly to talk with her about her work. He regretted to observe she did not model her style after Shakespeare. Shakespeare seemed to have had no influence whatever upon her style. The quality of this reproach was marvellous to Monica, beyond all words. Dumb, aghast, she waited. “Now I,” continued her visitor, “have made it my practice for years to model my style after Shakespeare. Let me read you this essay. The *Inland Review* has just rejected it. I am surprised at them. They’ve got a poor management there, I fear. Carefully observe my style, and you will comprehend my meaning.” Monica listened, comprehended, and again learned something that her teacher did not suspect.

The third learned pundit who was good enough to interest himself in her intellectual development — and this was, in truth, a very great man — frankly intimated idyls were not to his taste; what she ought to write was a great, stirring, international political novel, — that was the sort of thing she ought to do;

nothing else was worth while. He sketched a couple of plots for her with such rapidity and ease that Monica innocently asked him why he did not write the books himself. Others came and went, each bringing his scheme, his hobby, his self-absorption, and considerable disappointment for Monica. No one perceived her special need, yet it was great. From no one did she obtain the help and guidance that she sought. Still her mentor's counsels were not all in vain. Indirectly, at least, she learned from them that intellects are stubborn things, not to be moulded except in their own way and in their own time; above all, according to their own potentialities; and that writing, like living, is lonely work.

Presently undreamed-of missives and communications from the great outer world of strangers began to pour upon her. Requests for her opinion upon Hypnotism, Pessimism, Vivisection, Woman Suffrage, and the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy alarmed her beyond measure. Inquiries whether she composed with or without the use of tobacco and stimulants, at what time of day her genius was most prolific, whether she could or could not create an ideal character, dismayed her no

less. In this last demand sounded a suppressed but threatening asperity. Requests for her autograph arrived in shoals, and she never acceded to them without the mortifying consciousness that her signature was the very best thing she had ever written. Some people insisted upon having an *original sentiment*, as if that sort of thing grew upon every bush. What mortal may dare to say that he has ever even seen one? Others insidiously desired her to kindly inform them who was the author of those sweet lines :

“ Many a gallant, gay domestic
Bows before him at the door; ”

or of the noble verse :

“ Footsteps which perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
Some forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.”

She was even honored by an occasional anonymous letter. Marked paragraphs in newspapers informed her — long before she ever set foot in Italy — that she was persistently floating about Venice in a golden gondola; and that she, by choice and by chance a ringless being, possessed three hundred and sixty-

five rings sparkling with priceless gems, all the gifts of dear friends; which fable the desperate paragraphist, at a loss for copy, had evidently cribbed from the *Arabian Nights*, and appended to the first name he saw in a catalogue.

All these things seemed to Monica rather severe punishment for one youthful indiscretion, and although, in spite of her denseness, she dimly perceived that it is thus that that much vaunted thing, the free voice of a free people, — the American Press, at the close of the nineteenth century, — delights to honor the literary guild, she was by no means, as yet, convinced that she belonged therein.

But when in a Chicago sheet she beheld an article upon a certain school of writers, and a big blotch purporting to be herself amid other big black blotches purporting to be men and women of letters, she struggled no longer. With a gasp and a groan of contrition she glanced at her shelves, where, in calm disdain, the Mighty stood, — Montaigne and Molière, Shakespeare, Shelley, Balzac, Thackeray, and Goethe; in their wake poets, philosophers, scientists, modern novelists of renown, — and murmuring: "You see how it is yourselves," she meekly bowed her head, set

off on the path elected for her by destiny in collusion with newspapers, but never chosen by her own free will and convictions, stole shamefaced into that School, with her own hands shut the door behind her, and took her place — at the foot of the class.

VII

It was a Thursday, not a busy day for the magazine, nor yet absorbing for *The Panyphone* article. As Monica drew on her gloves, prudently thinking it was perhaps time to have her teeth examined, a button fell. She delayed long enough to sew it on. When, shortly after, she arrived at the American dentist's, the maid said that, a patient having excused himself, the doctor had seized his opportunity, and gone off for an hour on his bicycle, not five minutes ago. Monica was not sorry to escape a prosaic and possibly painful experience, and hoped he would enjoy the fresh air. He looked pale enough to need it.

She had heard of a Goethe-Breviary, a revelation of the Master's life in his poems, and went into a bookshop to ask for it. They told her they had that instant sold their last copy, but would send her one immediately. Wishing to get some violets for Mrs. Loring, who was exceptionally miserable in those days, Monica was now informed by her

pet flower-woman that Prince Ruprecht had just ordered their entire stock of violets to be laid in the shape of an enormous cushion at some fair lady's feet. It seemed rather odd to Monica that she, like no less a person than old Mother Hubbard, was arriving everywhere one moment too late. She was therefore cheerfully impressed, when face to face on the threshold of the flower-shop she met Elizabeth McCarroll, looking as bright as the morning.

"At last one good thing has waited for me," and Monica related her small experiences while Elizabeth bought her flowers. "Fate has relented, it seems, otherwise you and your roses would have already vanished like Prince Ruprecht's cushion — barbarous idea, that cushion."

"Do you believe in Fate?" Elizabeth asked, smiling, as they walked on together.

"In Law — yes. Of course I was fishing about these trifles."

"If there is such a thing as Fate, then there can be no trifles," Elizabeth retorted with unwonted sententiousness. "There may be a divinity that shapes the loss of a glove-button," she continued incredulously, "but —"

"If we are not careful, we shall soon be launched on Free-will and Predestination, which,

in the absence of Mr. Loring, would be too much for us."

Elizabeth made a wry face.

"Nothing muddles my poor brains more than that subject, which has no end and no beginning. Besides, they always prove that one is as true as the other, which is *agaçant*, as you must admit. It is simply incomprehensible to me how you can let Mr. Loring preach at you so. I call it intemperate. He was there fully three hours on Monday. When I came in for the second time, there you were still at it, and you looked like pleurably excited owls."

"But I preach too," returned Monica, smiling. "I am from New England, you know. We drink in a taste for theology with our mother's milk. Besides, I have a special incentive; once we had a very young, prim clergyman, helplessly aristocratic in his tastes and equally exclusive in his tenets—at this distance I may perhaps venture to call him a holy snob. No one ever irritated me so much. I had sometimes a wild desire to get up and ask him how he knew that all outcasts, and criminals, and souls that had never had a chance, and souls tempted beyond the dimensions of his neat hat-box horizon, were all doomed to

eternal perdition, unless they marched and gave the countersign within the pale of our church, how he dared to be so cocksure of anything so monstrous, and if he could not understand his little twopence ha'penny scheme of salvation was not large enough to go round this planet, let alone the universe."

"Why did you mind? I should have been looking at the bonnets."

"Oh, I always looked at the bonnets too. But I minded because it never seemed fair play. I thought somebody ought to get up and speak a word for the absent. It seemed preposterous that he should instruct tough old graybeards who knew life. But no doubt their heads were in their ledgers. They did not care what he said. They were respectable vestrymen, paid their fees punctually and felt that they had insured a safe passage to the other shore. Meanwhile stocks, not dogmas, were their affair. But I used to sit and glare at him, and he had a voice like honey and administered suave damnation to his fellow-creatures. If he had suspected the awful things I was hurling at him in my agitation! Can you not grasp the fact that they cannot help being what they are? Why don't you preach tenderness instead of clan-

nish and cruel self-righteousness? Why don't you preach freedom? The green elm branches waving gently outside the open windows, the wandering bird that darts in circles round the chancel, hovers an instant, and as if uncertain soars on fleet wing out and away, preaches better than you. For I was not wise enough to give him the same indulgence I claimed for the others, and to remember he could not help being what he was. So his sermons created in me a great store of pent-up indignation which I never supposed I should have the opportunity to let off. But Mr. Loring preaches and is good enough to let me preach back at him and not mind my little irregularities of style and want of the proper seminary-manner, and I call it providential: a late but just compensation."

"So you are rating your little curate over Mr. Loring's shoulders?"

"Yes."

"What a terribly retentive person you are! And fancy working one's self up to such a pitch of excitement over the criminals, and outcasts, and heathen! I have more than enough to occupy my small mind in my own troublesome affairs, with now and then a good

bit of gossip about my neighbors. But you have, I presume, what they call the imaginative temperament. A very uncanny thing, too, it must be to drag about with one everywhere. I noticed its eccentricities the other night as we sat so quiet in your room after twelve, still intoxicated by "Tannhäuser," and somebody ran down the pavement. I heard boots, a man's heavy boots, no more, no less, and they interested me not a whit. But you saw a deathbed, or birth, a family in consternation, pain, grief, heaven knows what. You seemed distressed. You got up and looked after him — as if that were sensible!"

"But it was so striking in the utter stillness. It began far away at the extreme end of the street and came nearer and nearer, and grew loud and louder, and passed beneath our windows, and on and on, grew less loud and fainter, and died away, and all that time the step never flagged or changed. It was a young man, running skilfully and with a purpose. A boy whose mother, it may be, was dying. I was sorry for him. Or whose young wife was in her agony. Or a little child was suffering. Somewhere was human need or he could not have run so bravely. To me these are facts, not imagination."

"I refuse to abandon my position. They were mere boots, and I have not an atom of curiosity as to why, whence, or whither the ugly hobnailed things ran. Otherwise I should retort that the youth had been carousing with his boon or beer-companions and was trying to get home before his father."

Monica laughed.

"Beer cannot run like that."

"Oh, well! Some other sort of lark, then. Monica, tell me one thing. Was it exclusively theology that occupied your séance of three hours?"

"No. We had other little pastimes. Hypnotism and astronomy."

"Awful! One would never imagine you were learned," Elizabeth declared candidly. "You look quite like anybody else — nicer than some, it's fair to admit, but really not so intimidatingly clever, you know."

"O wise young judge!"

"I am not, never was, never shall be clever."

"So much the better! Then why all this mummer?"

"It is merely," Monica confessed, "that I revel in things I do not understand. They fascinate me, Elizabeth, possess, pursue me."

"I know, Boots!"

They walked on in silence for a while.

"Pretty town," said Monica at length. "How it grows upon one! Sometimes I think I may miss it when I'm gone."

"But you are not thinking of leaving?"

"Whenever my mother comes. Perhaps before. I've stayed already longer than I meant."

"Everybody does here. I came for six months and have been here two years. One meets with — detentions," she added vaguely.

"Oh yes," Monica assented vaguely.

"You are fortunate in having a mother to come for you?" Elizabeth said after a moment, in a fierce sort of way.

Monica felt nearer to her from that moment, and replied gently:

"You have Robert."

"Bob is a good boy. But otherwise I have only uncles. And uncles, let me tell you, are an arid waste." She gave a hard little laugh, followed instantly by a marvellous softening of her features and a vivid flush; which signals Monica noted, together with the gleams on the face of the saluting officer, who had suddenly ridden round a corner upon them. It was evident to her that Elizabeth's "detention" wore the blue and white uniform of a lieutenant of

dragoons. For, whatever Monica failed to perceive, she was an instinctive observer of the ways of men and women with one another, of husbands and wives, of lovers — of the primordial, the manifold, the eternal Adam and Eve.

Elizabeth spoke hurriedly:

"Do you happen to know where you are going — by the might of your glove button?"

"I do not in the least care. I am walking for the walk and for the good company."

"Thank you. I have two objects in view, neither very pressing. A pair of tennis-shoes — and the bank. For the shoes we turn here to the left. For the money to the right. Wait. She broke off a bit of the long stems of two roses, concealed them in her handkerchief and presented their swathed heads to Monica. "Draw. We will leave it to fate. Long stem, bank. Short, tennis-shoes."

Monica, amused, drew the long stem.

"Fate wills that you have the pleasure of seeing me draw £10, and of being smiled upon by the handsome Ferdinand."

"He is very nice. He looks like an old Norseman, a Viking."

"But one who has not in vain lived fifteen years in Paris."

"At all events, the result is agreeable. He is a great blond eagle with beautiful manners."

At the very entrance door of the bank Elizabeth stopped and said mischievously:

"Miss Aspasia, do you admit that I can change my mind now and go and get my tennis-shoes?"

"Of course."

"Then I am a free agent?"

"To that extent, yes."

"All right. Then you shall see the handsome Ferdinand."

"I cannot deny I prefer him to the alternative."

"For what you are about to receive, thank your glove button," Elizabeth muttered wickedly as they passed in.

"It is too small. It wants to shirk responsibility. Besides, it is only a link in an endless chain."

"Don't! It is a good point of departure — and I hate your chain. It makes me dizzy."

They were hardly ten minutes at the bank. The handsome Ferdinand received them in his private room, smiled benignly and impartially upon them. Monica, to whom beauty in man or woman was a keen joy, and a species of consolation, often indeed had power to divert

her from painful thoughts, to absorb her utterly in ardent contemplation, watched the banker's high and haughty head bending gallantly over Elizabeth's pretty creaminess of skin, her reddish hair, her red and eager mouth, her restless eyes and restless ways, and thought the two made a charming picture.

He complimented her upon her dashing signature.

"You foreign ladies are so amazingly adroit. You never remove your glove, write standing, leaning on one elbow — with one stroke of the pen — it's all one to you. But our ladies take themselves more seriously, I assure you. They respect preliminaries. Until they get the right pen and are seated comfortably they look as solemn as if they were about to take their oath."

"Life is so short!" sighed Elizabeth.

"You intend to get all you can out of it, little one," he reflected, looking down upon her indulgently.

"How is the beautiful voice?"

"Variable, like its owner."

"And my friend Rob?"

"Well, happy, thanks. Always doing what he ought, and doing it admirably. A crushing example to his frivolous sister."

To this he made some amiable rejoinder, occupied himself a few minutes with Monica, shook hands with them cordially, and was about to open the door for them.

"By the way, Rob enters the sixth class in the autumn, does he not?" To what professor shall you send him?"

"Has one any choice?"

"Oh yes, if one expresses it in good season. My boys were all with Professor Steiner, and were devoted to him. That was some years ago, but I suppose he cannot have changed unless to grow more mild and mellow. There is a parallel professor to be avoided, I believe, a sharp martinet sort of fellow. You'd better send Rob to Steiner. He is of excellent family, altogether superior."

"How does one do it?"

"You can write, or, better still, go personally to Professor Steiner." He looked at his watch. "You have just time now — if you want to run over to the *Gymnasium*, you will catch him at twelve. Tell him I sent you."

"And all I have to say is 'your compliments, I'd like Bob to enter his class in the autumn'?"

"The simplest thing in the world, you see."

"It is very good of you to suggest it," she said heartily. "You are always so thoughtful."

"Now we'll tackle the old professor," she exclaimed gayly, and they walked off briskly, reaching the *Gymnasium* on the stroke of twelve in time to find the janitor, inquire for Professor Steiner's room and meet a thousand boys like an avalanche thundering down the great stairway. Elizabeth and Monica stood aside, amused. The little boys pulled off their caps with a perfunctory inadvertent snatch, the great boys saluted handsomely.

"They are fine fellows," said Monica heartily. "See that beauty! Lovely head—and what a pretty back! I'm glad we happened to come. I like to see them flying by."

"In about ten years or so some of them may be very well worth looking at," Elizabeth remarked amiably. "But where is my Rob? Perhaps his class has had English and he is gone home."

As soon as the thoroughfare was clear, the two, possessed by intentions as innocent as ever inspired the human breast since the world was made, went up some long flights of iron stairs and found Class VI. B. In response to Elizabeth's knock and inquiry, a small boy, after dodging back for instructions,

showed them into an adjacent room, and told them Professor Steiner, being occupied, begged them to excuse him for five minutes.

It was a dusty little place with one window, one table, one chair—and some copy-books in pigeon-holes.

“I’m going to take the liberty to open the window,” said Monica. “My passage through life is marked by open windows.”

“Do you suppose he would be shocked if I should sit on the table?” and Elizabeth suited the action to the word.

“I think he would have apoplexy.”

Monica was in brighter spirits than she had known in many months. Her old harmless trustful gayety of the heart was for the moment restored to her—her health, her youth, the soft June day, and a growing sympathy with Elizabeth influencing her. She stood smiling and thinking of nothing at all, and idly watching Elizabeth swing her pretty shoes, when a slight sound outside brought those symmetric objects to the floor with a bound, the door opened, and Professor Steiner stood before his visitors. What they saw—they had wasted hardly a thought upon his personality, yet instinctively had anticipated something venerable and mild—was a man

of middle height with a growing rotundity beneath his too short waistcoat, a red face, a redder nose, a pink bald head, a scanty fringe of sandy hair, and pale blue glassy eyes. He wore a long black coat, a gay cravat, pearl-gray trousers, and seemed to be struggling with insensate embarrassment. Both girls, each after her own fashion, pronounced him a sorry figure.

The interview was brief. Monica had reason afterwards to remember that it could not have lasted three minutes.

Elizabeth very properly and prettily gave her message.

Professor Steiner replied that he should be happy to receive her brother, he himself would be absent at the beginning of the school year. His health obliged him to take a furlough. A very good vicar, however, would have charge of the class until Easter, when he hoped to return.

While with incomprehensible difficulty and agitation he made this simple statement to Elizabeth, his glassy eyes continually sought Monica.

The one time she spoke was to bid him good morning as they left. Swiftly and in silence, with discreet countenances, for stray

professors crossed their path, they fled from the building, but, once in the street, they turned and looked in each other's eyes.

"If that is a German professor — heaven save the mark!"

"A most unfortunate type!"

"No mortal has a right to look like that."

"Poor thing, he cannot help it, I suppose — but he is dreadful — most dreadful — altogether dreadful."

"Now I think he can help it. He may not be to blame for his cast of countenance, but he certainly need not have such a skin. He'd better not show himself until he's taken proper baths and medicines. He is a terror."

"I'm very thankful I have not to go to his school," said Monica fervently.

"Poor Rob! I should have a fit. Can you imagine boys attaching themselves to that man?"

"No, I cannot. Still he may be nicer with them."

"And why did he glare at you while he stammered at me?"

"He was very singular."

"If that man is mellow," declared Elizabeth after walking on a while in silence, "he is mellow with alcohol."

Monica laughed.

"Oh, how can that be possible after the praise of him we heard to-day, and from such a cavalier? And Professor Steiner told us himself that he was ill and going away."

"He'd better go," said Elizabeth dryly, "and if it's not too late he'd better learn how to enter a room without knocking the door off the hinges. I cannot endure men who run into doors and jeopardize the furniture. And if you will allow me to inquire, why, oh why does he wear pearl-gray trousers in his classroom?"

"I am afraid we are very hard-hearted," said Monica, "but he was so disconcerted and so disconcerting, it is a relief to remember how short your mission was, and that we never need trouble him, or he us again."

"Amen," responded Elizabeth. Whereupon they spoke of other things.

That afternoon Monica sat busily biting her pen and wondering what she should next attack for *The Panyphone*. An inexplicably unpleasant quality in Professor Steiner's glazed stare haunted her for a while against her will. "Ah, what does it matter to me how the poor man looks!" But presently she thought no more of him, for dear old Mr. Loring walked

in unannounced, silent and care-laden, with a certain air of resolution, sat down in a large arm-chair as if he were come to stay, crossed his legs, wiped his brow, stroked his gray beard, regarded her some moments with his puzzled, kind, weary eyes and finally propounded in a slow and mournful voice, the somewhat startling query:

“ Miss Randolph, do you believe in Transubstantiation? ”

VIII

"MONICA, this sofa is inhuman. If I were you, I should prattle about it to *The Panyphone*, and say something original about Procrustes. It is horribly hard, and my feet dangle. Can't you swing up a hammock by way of hospitality?"

"No."

"Monica, have you any cigarettes?"

"No."

"Monica, that table cover hurts my eyes. It does not look as if it belonged in your Serene Highness's apartment. It is really awful. Would you mind if I should bring you something quiet and soft?"

"No."

"Monica, what are you giving them to-day? Do you really think it worth fifteen dollars? Do you know anything about it?"

"No!"

"Monica, what is your opinion of the holy institution of wedlock, 'so comfortable a thing to them who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to those who will presume to receive it

unworthily?'— 'And he marched them all in two by two, the elephant and the kangaroo.'"

"No."

"Come! That is not polite, my dear. A truly great mind can write articles for newspapers and talk with me at the same time. There is something very irritating in your diligence, Monica. It is very *bourgeois*. Besides it is ruinous to the figure. Now if you could only see your back!"

"I'm afraid at the moment I'd rather see yours."

"Thank you. But I shall stay with you, dear. You really ought to learn to attend to me and *The Panyphone* at once. Think of the great Napoleon. . . . Oh, Monica, that's not fair. You've begun something else! Ah, do stop that wretched business and talk to me."

"I must do these 'Answers to Correspondents,' Elizabeth, for the boy is waiting. Why do you not help me? It would be rather more sensible than to lie there and talk nonsense and admire your finger-nails."

"What do our Correspondents want to know?"

"Just turn to 'Ironclads,' in Meyer's '*Conversations-Lexicon*,' will you, Elizabeth? It's on the upper shelf. Put a mark in, please.

Find 'Petroleum,' too, and 'Aluminium,' if you don't mind, while I attend to 'Nina,' who wants a remedy for freckles."

"There is none, on this side Jordan's wave. I ought to know. What are you telling her?"

"To take a cold bath in the morning, and a hot bath at night, and to sleep with her windows open. She probably does nothing of the kind, and it will be good for her," Monica said benevolently.

"Oh, Monica, what a disreputable employment for a girl of good family."

"It is, rather, but then we women cannot choose our lot. Do you suppose men editors are such hypocrites?"

"Oh! They!"

"I at least never do my correspondents any harm," Monica said, rather doubtfully.

"Oh, don't you? What is the next?"

"Plain sailing. A P. wants to know if champagne is bad for gout. We reply: *Consult your medical adviser.*"

"Simpleton!"

"Here is one who is rather alarming. 'X. Reutlingen.' I am always declining his translations of Heine. People who know almost no English are possessed by a frantic desire to translate Heine into that tongue. X. Reut-

lingen does not like me. He objects to the management of *The Nosegay*. He is always threatening to withdraw his subscription. He sounds as if he were approaching with a club."

"He probably thinks you are bald and have a gray beard, Monica."

"Yes, they all do. Wait. What shall I say. He is really quite insulting, you know, and he has sent more Heine. 'Sir — sir.'"

"'Sir,'" suggested Elizabeth, "'you are an old duffer!'"

"I have it. I'll advise him to apply to the *Pall Mall Budget*. Perhaps then he'll try a lot of English papers, and it will be a long time before he gets round to me again. So much for X. Reutlingen," continued Monica in a rapid murmur. "'Dora B.' Answer. Easy quotation from Tennyson. — '*Ella*.' Ditto from Longfellow."

"'Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax,
Her cheeks like the dawn of day.'"

When they want that sort of thing, I feel that I have not lived in vain. I can give them any amount. — '*Juliet*.' A girl who loves passionately, irrevocably, and eternally the one, while her cruel parents insist upon sacrificing her to the other."

"Oh, just let me attend to her!" cried Elizabeth.

"No, I don't trust you. You would compromise the dignity of this editorial chair."

"Shall you tell her to take a bath or to consult her medical adviser?"

Monica wrote busily. "The ironclads, please. How can people want to know such things?—*'A Constant Reader.* We thank you for your kind expressions of approval and interest which—'"

"Which are particularly gratifying at this season," proposed Elizabeth, "'when X. Reutlingen is prowling about our office with a bludgeon—'"

"Be quiet!" murmured Monica abstractedly. "Hm—hm—'but the point in question is unfitted for discussion in these pages.'"

"Because you know nothing about it?"

"Of course. 'We advise you consult—to consult—your solicitor.'"

"Happy thought!"

"There, that will do for to-day, I think. Don't look so wicked, Elizabeth, I'm going to ring for the boy."

"Now, Monica, come here and listen to me. I'm tired of this place, let us go to Italy. Don't say no. You have said nothing but

No all the afternoon. You are *der Geist der stets verneint*."

"But I'm going later, when my mother comes."

"Yes, I know. But why cannot we run down there now?"

Monica looked at her thoughtfully.

She seemed restless, tired, feverish. She complained that she could not sing, had no more voice than a pipe-stem. She was always haunting Monica's rooms, whimsical, gay, with a hungry look in the eyes.

"Talk to me, Monica. Entertain me. I'm bored."

"Eleanor could do the proof-reading for *The Nosegay*, I suppose, and any extra work. Of course I'd make up the numbers in advance."

"That little encyclopedia! I should say so! She has petroleum at her fingers' ends, and warships too, I don't doubt."

"Appallingly clever child. She is coaching some young men here for Oxford. When those great dark eyes under that big forehead, and her wild hair and shy little person appeared in response to their advertisement, it must have been a delicious moment."

"She's a good little thing, but if you praise

her you'll make me jealous. I'm a disgustingly jealous wretch, do you know?"

"You don't mind leaving Robert?"

"He's better off without me. Sometimes I think if I should die to-morrow he would hardly miss me."

"Ah, he needs you so, and is so fond of you."

"I'm not a good sort of a sister. I have a bad conscience. I'm too scatterbrained. Say, will you go off with me, Monica?"

"She's wild to get away," thought Monica. "She is miserable and desperate. Her eyes are haggard, she is growing thin and losing her voice. That is what we call being in love. I wonder if there is no other planet where they manage these things better." In her own heart too was great dreariness, for Keith's letters were rarer and shorter, all the sweetness that she found she had to read into them herself.

"Don't stare at me like that, Monica. Think aloud."

"Yes, I'll go if you like for a little trip — say for five or six weeks."

Just before Easter they went over the Brenner into Italy.

At Easter Professor Steiner, after a half

year's absence returned home by the Gothard and reassumed his duties.

This unimportant and unattractive fact the travellers heard promptly from Robert, who wrote his sister in Verona the professor was awfully kind to him. The fellows had found it out already. Whenever they wanted anything, they sent him up as spokesman.

"Clever of us to steam into Italy just as he steamed out," said Elizabeth.

"Rather!"

Presently the Frau Professor wrote that Professor Steiner's attention to Robert was most unusual, and certainly very flattering and profitable to the boy, whom he took on long walks, invited to his house and evidently regarded with real affection.

"That is all very nice for Bob, provided he likes it, but I really hope we are not going to be accompanied through Italy by news of Professor Steiner," Elizabeth remarked as Monica gave her this information in Florence.

In Rome came a letter from Professor Steiner himself, asking Elizabeth if she would kindly allow Robert to ride with him on half holidays. As Robert was riding regularly, and he, the professor, found riding excellent for his still delicate health it would be a real

pleasure to have the companionship of his bright little friend. Professor Steiner added a few words of hearty commendation of Bob's character and talents, presented his compliments to both ladies and wished them much happiness in Italy.

Elizabeth regarded this document with a mistrustful and vindictive air.

"Now, why does he write all that, Monica? Why does he not simply ride with Rob? Why does he bore and haunt one so? When I look at the Faun of Praxiteles to-day I shall certainly remember those pearl-gray trousers and their excruciating attitude. I am not going to write to him. I'll simply tell Rob of course he may ride with his odious professor, and much joy to them!"

But Professor Steiner was indefatigably polite and wrote to thank Miss McCarroll for her kindness and proof of confidence. Again he presented his compliments to Miss Randolph. He ventured to hope the ladies would not fail to see the Torlonia Museum. There were some interesting old mosaics and frescos in Santa Maria in Travastere which everybody did not go to see. And the pines and cypresses and long peaceful vistas in the Pamfili Doria garden he hoped they would not neglect.

Monica and Elizabeth stared at each other with resentment.

"He might as well tell us not to forget to throw our pennies into the Fountain of Trevi!"

"Or to go to see the Baths of Caracalla or the Coliseum by moonlight, and to hear the nightingales."

"Everybody goes to Santa Maria in Trastevere."

"Everybody goes to see the Torlonia gems and fauns."

"Everybody goes to the Pamfili Doria garden."

"The man is intrusive. He tires me," Elizabeth said petulantly.

"He is tiresome. He seems to have very little tact, but I suppose he means it kindly enough. He has just been here, knows it all by heart, is learned, and thinks us ignorant helpless things, I suppose. Let us absolve him, since he is at a good distance, like the priests at St. Peter's we saw touching penitents' heads with that long thing, to absolve them quickly from little sins without confession."

"If he'd not attempt to be our Pocket Guide!"

He informed himself of their course, his

intimacy with Robert affording him rich opportunity. He called upon the Frau Professor to express his satisfaction in Robert's scholarship and soon wandered to the two ladies and the Italian journey. Through her, through the people with whom Elizabeth and Robert were living, through Rob himself, the travellers received the professor's painstaking pedantic messages for their guidance. It was evident they were incessantly in his thoughts, and his awkward persistency followed them from place to place, dwelt with them and conjured up his unsympathetic presence in every charming spot.

They must surely go to Siena: they must not fail to see the well at Orvieto, and the mosaics and choir books: it would be a great pity if they should not visit the Temple at Paestum, he had something to commend at Capri, to warn against at Sorrento: churches, statues, pictures, landscapes, he recommended with ever increasing insistence.

"We can hardly enjoy anything for the trail of the Steiner," Monica complained.

"It is altogether disgusting how often one has to think of that odious man."

Monica beheld Keith among emperors, athletes and gods.

Her mother wrote, after months in which she had not mentioned him, that he was looking very jolly. He was growing, she thought, stout. He went out more than formerly. He was rather devoted to Kitty, and played chess five evenings a week with Kitty's husband. It was impossible for Monica to explain why these apparently innocent remarks made her so uncomfortable. Stout? Well, was there harm in that? But Kitty, silly little Kitty! Five evenings a week of Kitty! And the letters so rare now, so — well, yes, — so dry and indifferent. She wrote many letters from Italy to Keith, ardent letters, clinging desperately to the past, reminding him of the old sweetness, the old nearness, the old power and charm—all that was immutable, eternal between them, letters that had the effect of a bombardment of his heart, and that were, although she knew it not, alive with subtle reproach. She believed that this was pure faithfulness on her part. She would have repudiated the suggestion of any baser quality in her intense pleading. But her mother's astute hints, together with the thrilling influences of Italy roused her to summon all her strength for a last effort to keep what seemed to be slipping fatally away from her, her

priceless treasure that she had deemed hers till death. So she walked in beauty, was thrilled and lifted up and comforted and possessed by the divine dreams of human souls; dreams caught and held in marble, glowing on canvas, frozen in architecture, projected like a heavenly vision in vanishing landscape: and she was less unhappy than she knew, being strong and young and swayed by every touch of beauty: yet she struggled much and longed for what she had not, and suffered, missing the warmth she craved, feeling too, she was robbed of her rights.

Of all these things in her heart she said not one word to Elizabeth, who in her turn was capricious, fitful, sometimes unreasonable and irritable about trifles, repenting sweetly like a child — droll, silent, weary — everything by turns, breaking forth into fascinating song whenever she had had a particularly bad mood and calling triumphantly:

“When I sing, you forgive me. Everybody does. When I sing I can tame anybody, — even those old brutes, my uncles.”

But the cause of her great restlessness, her physical nervousness, her comfortlessness, she did not intimate. Monica, observing her gently between palaces and pictures, was more than

ever convinced that in respect to its provision for the incalculable element called love, this must be one of the most inadequate of planets.

So the two wandered on, growing more closely attached and accustomed to each other in the intimacy of daily life, in the oneness of their interests, the charm and freedom of their little adventures. They found and lost delightful fellow-pilgrims, friends of a week, of a day, meeting them in old Pompeii, or in the sweet tranquillity of ancient cloisters, and something like affection, like a vague prayer crept into those light farewells.

"So much beauty and goodness, so much sympathy in the world," said Monica vehemently one day. "That one cannot hold and keep it! That one can keep nothing!"

"Not even one's ideals," she added bitterly in her heart. "Not even one's belief in undying friendship — not even the poor comfort of loving letters to help one to go on and live one's life." Still, Keith's last note, hardly more effusive than a commercial bulletin, went everywhere with her through the Vatican, the churches, the catacombs, the ruins, and her hand clung to that bit of paper as she stood looking at lovely old landmarks and long sunny vistas seen through famed arches and

vanishing in the blue distances of the Alban hills.

"Don't!" exclaimed Elizabeth fiercely, and shook her, which was one of her manifestations of affection. Monica saw her friend's eyes were full of tears.

"If such as you begin like that, then such as I are lost! Can't you see I only keep up by hanging on to you? I never heard you talk so!" she said reproachfully. "It is quite out of character. The calm, the successful, the unconquered—that is your rôle. Don't let me hear any more pessimism from you again. It is too startling, and it's not artistic."

"Oh, I thought it only the proper thing—in Rome—and at the Palace of the Cæsars," Monica rejoined quietly, but Elizabeth regarded her suspiciously, shook her head, and for a whole half day was not contrary or boyish or inclined to tease.

"Do you like Hilda?" she said later.

"No," Monica replied, "I never liked Hilda."

"Well, that's a comfort at least."

They travelled easily, as women are apt to travel everywhere on the continent, if kind, possessed of a fair share of humor, without an

absolute hump, and not too British — above all not hampered by masculine protection. This, on the rare occasions when it could not be escaped, they found cumbersome, often fatal to their interests. Alone, every mother's son who put his eye on them was eager to do them service. They found themselves in an extra carriage when trains were overcrowded. Cabs appeared for them when there were none. The swift, odd, happy chance — the blessing of Hermes, god of wanderers, was always on their side, and the whole world of men, from the officials down to the porters, seemed imbued with a desire to protect them and hand them along safely. But did a man's countenance appear beside them as they steamed into a station — some hotel-acquaintance — some compatriot persuaded of the inherent helplessness of woman — all the pleasing alacrity upon which they counted as their good right, left them suddenly in the lurch. His "I say! Here! You!" and vigorous gesticulation were not alluring to the nearest lazy facchino, who, presumably, reasoned somewhat in this fashion: "You've got those nice-looking girls with you, and it is more than you deserve, you old cockney. Now look out for yourself."

Men do not, even for the hope of money,

instinctively fly to the aid of harassed men-travellers. Men do not long to be nice to men, are not in the least attracted by men's bright eyes and gentle voices, and it is safe to set this down as a positive truth: among the many illusions which men fondly cherish in respect of themselves, none is more utterly wide of the mark than that their mere presence makes for pleasurable to women travelling.

But although Monica and Elizabeth were apparently unescorted, three men, silent, invisible, ever present, accompanied them. By the Bay of Naples, by the rich Roman fountains, amid all classic memories, all monuments of a glorious past: listening to the nightingales and to the owls: driving in the gay Pincio or penetrating squalid streets teeming with life, ugliness, and smells: in their lovely quests, their ecstasies over their Botticellis, their adorations before many shrines, their search after painters and heroes and martyrs and lovers—finding now and then all united in one strong human soul: among the flowers at Florence, in the sunshine where all cries were musical notes—even fish and cabbage—and the smile of the old was young, and children looked like cherubs fresh from the hand of God: before the great John Bellini in

Venice: gliding in dusk under the bridges and out toward the Lido and the great ships where lights gleamed and flashed across the liquid distance: in the endless fascination of life, in the gleam of marble, the splash of water, the voices and the grace of boatmen, the curve of a stairway, the flitting of doves' wings, the witchery of sails: under the forest of ship-masts rising from the calm harbor of Trieste: beneath the olives and vines and myrtles of its hill-slopes, over the Semmering Pass by moonlight with wonderful visions of radiance and gloom, gigantic cloud effects, faces of Gods and Titans in uproar: in Vienna with its own charm, face, and voice and laughter, more pictures, music, and the church where imperial hearts lie—now at rest, did they ache more or less than other hearts?—in all that was full, warm, fresh and delightful on that journey, in all that was amusing and adventurous, three men never left them, one summoned in love by Monica, one summoned in love by Elizabeth, one summoned solely by himself, alas! to his own doom and destruction.

Professor Steiner's constant participation in their pleasures was most unnatural and, as Elizabeth said, "lurid." But they could not, in puerile pique, deprive themselves of loveliness

merely because he chose to suggest it to them. Much to their exasperation, his messages acquired a kind, intimate, and quasi-paternal tone. He seemed to imagine he was personally conducting their trip and to esteem himself of incalculable use. It was impossible to keep him long out of their thoughts, and they spoke of him oftener than they wished, if it were only to say: "Recommended unfortunately by Steiner." It irritated them in secret to find this stranger's name upon their lips, while the loved name was unspoken, but the truth is, women do not always tell all they know — no more perhaps than men.

Monica was conscious of a warmth and lightness of heart upon returning. The town nestled among its hills looked charming even after Italy and more homelike than anything this side the ocean. In pleasure-loving German fashion that likes to make a huge celebration of every possible fact of life, the Frau Professor had garlands and *Welcome Home* over the door and even the ugly, kindly old apple-woman on the corner flung benisons at Monica as she passed. "It's a dear loving people," she thought gratefully, and was touched anew, being often in her heart homesick and desolate.

Her rooms were full of flowers from different friends. On her desk a large mail. She examined it eagerly—a letter from her mother, nothing from Keith. Her books and familiar things seemed restful. Her heart was full and she thought with longing of her true home, yet this too had begun to be a sort of home to her. One is so thankful for kindness, she thought, one must live, after all. She looked out her windows at the noble and tranquil view she loved, and began to examine her flowers, letters, and cards.

Lorings. Nice. Count and Countess Arco. Hm! Baron Lobanow. Mr. Forsyth. The Smiths—surprises me! Eleanor—how dear! Excellenz Ehrenstein—sweet old man! Violets from Robert—dear little boy! Actually a basket from my colleagues on *The Nosegay*. Nice men! How good they all are! It's quite touching, really. Beautiful roses from Lieutenant Uhlefeldt. Ah, Elizabeth, all these are from the dear Frau Professor. And this? A massive bouquet surrounded by something like a crinoline skirt in white paper. Professor Steiner. No!" She dropped it, as if it were infectious.

"Frau Professor," she said to that lady, who, beaming with pleasure, now entered the room,

"this bouquet surprises me. Why should Professor Steiner presume to send me flowers? I do not know him," she added haughtily.

"He takes a great interest in you all," the old lady returned smiling, and with a flattered air. "He has been here three times to talk with me about you, and his devotion to Robert is creating considerable comment. Most professors of his standing hold themselves apart, you know," she explained with the evident pride of one belonging by annexation to the learned fraternity. "But he and Robert are inseparable."

"His devotion to Robert is all very well. I understand that. I adore Rob myself. But —"

Monica saw the fine old face turned uncomprehending toward her. She perceived that a new cap adorned the pretty gray hair and that the whole house was in gala, that unfeigned affection and delight welcomed her back, and she could not selfishly grumble and take umbrage because one man was stupid, which after all was nothing new under the sun.

"Is it dinner time?" she said, knowing that nothing pleased her hostess like appetite. "I don't doubt you have made a famous desert — better than anything I've tasted in Rome or Milan."

"Dear child," returned the Frau Professor, "I feel as if my daughter had come home."

On the following day, Monica received a brief note from Professor Steiner, begging her to allow him the pleasure of an interview to discuss some very important matters concerning Robert McCarroll's future. With her permission, Professor Steiner would call upon her the following Sunday.

It was cramped, queer handwriting, and reading it Monica frowned, remembering her antipathy in the little dusty room of the Gymnasium, the red face, the pale glassy eyes: recalling too, the incomprehensible insistence of the man, and how he had bored them all through beautiful Italy with his advice and monitions. The letter in her hand, she went at once to the Frau Professor.

"Will you read this, please?" she said.

"He is really very polite and attentive" rejoined the old lady affably.

Monica remembered, reasonably enough, that all persons are not unduly sensitive to physical attraction and repulsion, that Professor Steiner's personality need not happily seem to every one like a crashing dissonance, and that a glowing nose is not wholly incompatible with virtue. It was evident that she and Frau

Erhardt regarded him from very different points of view. The Frau Professor was a practical, shrewd, good woman. She might, she must, know her own townsmen better than a girl from over seas. Vastly less belligerent and more modest in spirit than two minutes before, Monica now ventured to remark:

"I cannot conceive why he wishes to speak with me instead of Elizabeth about Rob."

"I do not know, either," the Frau Professor responded deferentially, as a Roman matron might have alluded to the augurs. "But Robert seems almost more influenced by you, than by Miss McCarroll."

"Oh, because I can ride a wheel and know a little Latin," Monica exclaimed impatiently. "Elizabeth does everything for the boy."

"Yes, yes, I know," the old lady said soothingly. "But you seem more serious than Miss McCarroll. Everybody must notice that. And of course Professor Steiner is very observing," she concluded, with her complacent *esprit de corps*.

Monica, much dissatisfied with herself, returned to her room. It seemed to her she must be more petty than she suspected, to make so much of a trifle and to feel so singularly averse to meeting Professor Steiner. She

had to see so many indifferent people. Why not him? Frau Erhardt thought it the most natural thing in life that he should come to talk with her about Robert McCarroll. Very well. Let the man come and go, then. Meanwhile she had a large mail to answer, and something to write for *The Panyphone* and accumulated duties for *The Nosegay*. These things now were second nature to her. She bent her back willingly to the drudgery. It had ceased to be a remote and curious thing. She liked it, cared to do it well, wished she knew how to do it better.

On the following Sunday, at twelve o'clock, Professor Steiner rang Frau Professor Erhardt's door-bell.

Monica who beyond most women possessed the gift of iciness, rose from her desk, tall, stiff, unsmiling, and motioned him to a chair. She did not like this man. She did not know why he had come. She had instinctively taken the precautionary measure to open the doors into the Frau Professor's drawing-room. In spite of best intentions, she felt herself on guard, and no woman was ever less seductive than she made herself on this occasion.

Professor Steiner, even more glassy as to his eyes, redder as to his face, pearlier as to his

trousers and shorter as to his waistcoat, than she remembered him, and wearing too tight lavender kid gloves, bowed in uncontrollable embarrassment before her. His want of ease roused her compassion and disarmed her. She was sorry for him as for any mortal writhing in positive physical discomfort. Her forbidding mien relaxed. She became gentle, as with the infirm and disabled.

The interview was brief, hardly ten minutes. Noting this, the Frau Professor nodded her silvery head approvingly. The first visit! How punctilious in social observance were these learned men, after all!

Monica had not the heart to say that he had not uttered a word about Robert McCarroll, but had merely glared glassily at her and mumbled broken sentences about Greece and Italy.

On the following Sunday, at twelve o'clock, Professor Steiner, arrayed as before, and bearing boldly in his too-tightly gloved right hand a compact mass of variegated blossoms, encircled by a frise of prickly paper, appeared unexpectedly before Monica, and in one and the same moment roused her impatience and appealed to her tender mercies. He was so unpleasant and so helpless, so grotesque and

so innocent, she could but do her best to amuse and take care of him. She showed him her beautiful photographs of Rome and Venice, and took pains to entertain him with gentle talk of her journey and of Robert, whom Steiner, of himself, never once mentioned. But as the door closed behind him she rallied, and following her strongest instinct announced to the wondering Frau Erhardt:

"If that man ever comes here again, I am not at home."

"My dear child! A professor, and so eminent connections!" For the good old lady was of the old school that held man's will was law.

"I'm sorry, but I know no reason why he should come to see me. His wish is not sufficient. He distresses me. I don't know what he wants. I don't know what he means with that stare and that bouquet in pan-telettes!"

Frau Erhardt smiled wisely.

"When a man like him calls two Sundays in succession and brings flowers — of course he has intentions!"

"With us a man can come every Sunday, and every Wednesday to boot, and send cartloads of flowers, and have no intentions at all,

except nice friendly ones, thank heaven!" Monica responded; "and that is all the more reason why I never wish to see Professor Steiner again. Please say I am busy. Say anything you like."

"Well, dear. Of course, as you decide. I could have wished, indeed — and I hope you are acting wisely — his connections are so very eminent."

During the week a large portfolio of photographs of Greece was sent with Professor Steiner's compliments for Miss Randolph's inspection. Miss Randolph returned them the same day with compliments and thanks.

The next Sunday he came resplendent as before and bearing another barricaded bouquet. In accordance with Monica's instructions he was not granted entrance, but the Frau Professor was visibly distressed, and even the maid looked sympathetically perturbed.

On the following Sunday Professor Steiner and his bouquet were again denied admittance. The Frau Professor thought Monica rather stony-hearted and was not a little dismayed at the prolonged resistance of the garrison. Monica, innocent of the slightest sense of responsibility toward Professor Steiner and his

eminent connections, regarded the matter as a brief annoyance, now happily removed. She had resumed her duties with unusual energy, for which she had more cause than previously. Eight weeks in Italy had made a noticeable increase in her expenditures, and the letter which met her arrival announced that Mrs. Randolph's speculations were rather wavering and gas stock had fallen abominably, so that she must still postpone coming, but hoped shortly to have things well in hand. For the first time in her life it seemed to Monica that earning money might, in her case, become a serious thing and have some meaning and dignity. She longed greatly for her mother's presence, wondered whether the Italian journey had not been almost selfishness. Of course one could not foretell ill luck in speculations of which one knew nothing, or the constant depression of gas stock. She determined, however, to write as much as possible. Another book might balance the gas stock. She could do more little things too. She had time enough, she thought with bitterness. In all that month, in nearly six weeks indeed, there was no letter from Keith — no reply to those most ardent, intense appeals from Italy. To all her love

—silence. She waited dreadingly. It seemed to her, the one sure and comforting thing in life, the one thing entirely her own, that would never change and never fail, was her mother's love.

It was therefore not surprising that she deemed Professor Steiner's eccentricities of small significance. When she, Elizabeth, and Eleanor were together, and one jest led to another, he was occasionally the subject of some irony, which seemed in justice no more than his due.

"Don't be too secure, Monica," Elizabeth warned her, as the three sat in midnight conclave. "Old Pinky will throw the handkerchief yet!"

Monica raised her eyebrows and said nothing.

"She means he will, in that case, have the pleasure of picking it up himself," Eleanor suggested.

"Oh, no," Monica said listlessly, "I mean nothing at all. He will have no chance to pursue his whims here—and no doubt he has abandoned them. Suppose we don't talk of him."

"Men are awkward brutes," declared Elizabeth roundly, "and twenty centuries more or

less have taught them precious little sense. The ones you don't want stick closer than a brother, and the one you do want — ”

The three stared rather blankly at one another and presently said good night.

It was early in July, rather more than a month since Monica's return from Italy that Elizabeth's insolent prophecy was fulfilled.

Professor Steiner threw the handkerchief.

In the most straightforward manner in the world he wrote to Monica Randolph and offered her his heart, hand, and house in Park Street. He mentioned in minute detail the exact amount of his capital and income, the nature of his investments, and his yearly salary. He said that he possessed an amiable disposition and eminent connections at court, hence was confident he could make her happy. He declared that he had no need or desire to inquire as to her worldly possessions; this point was supremely indifferent to him, his own fortune being ample. He was proud to lay it at her feet. They would take beautiful journeys together. Since the first moment he had looked upon her face, a year since, it had haunted him sleeping and waking. In all the loveliness of Greece and Italy he had seen only her. He had sought the society of little

Rob as a bond of connection with her. She was never out of his thoughts. Her ascendancy over him was supreme. He could not in words express his devotion.

He ventured to look for a speedy and favorable reply and was hers sincerely, Heinrich Steiner.

IX

MONICA was confirmed in her theory that it is the impossible that oftenest happens. She deplored but resented that letter. No man had the right to present an offer of marriage like a pistol at one's breast. It was evident too that he thought he was doing a handsome thing in openly stating his indifference to a *dot*. Monica did not appreciate this magnanimity. There was a loathsome tone of confidence and puerile naïveté pervading the letter. That a woman in her senses could refuse him, his house in Park Street, his ample means, and his eminent connections evidently did not occur to him as a remote possibility. It was intolerable and to her odious but also very deplorable for his sake that nothing had restrained him from this most unwarrantable step. His expressions of devotion made her shudder. She recalled his unpleasing personality, as she had seen him once in the little room in the Gymnasium, twice in her study three or four minutes — ten minutes — fifteen minutes — not a

half hour in all. That one second once in her own experience had been long enough for the recognition of love, she did not remember. The man had taken an unconscionable liberty. This was most distressing. She did not, however, forget that the result was going to be distressing to him also.

She was not an hysterical woman, but this was a considerable shock to her nerves. After rereading Professor Steiner's letter twice carefully, her horror increasing rather than diminishing, she wrote a reply in three lines, her meaning unmistakable, her language, she hoped, very polite. In the case of another person she would have been the first to perceive the humor of the situation. As things were she perceived none. That instinct which we all have to break bad news gently, not to rouse sleeping children, possessed her. Frame her answer as she would, it sounded like a brickbat in words. She was much troubled.

"The Germans are so much more circumstantial than we. They use so many old-fashioned phrases, and my style is so terribly direct. Of course he deserves it—but it is going to strike him like a bomb, he is so idiotically unsuspecting, so helplessly arrogant." She was conscious in spite of her

indignation of a sneaking pity for her aggressor.

Pale, feeling altogether shattered, she went over to the Frau Professor's rooms.

"I'm afraid I must ask you to look at these letters," Monica said quietly.

Frau Erhardt had been a little dissatisfied with Monica. It had seemed too much temerity for a mere earth-born woman to place obstacles in the path of an advancing professor. But now the old lady turned cordially to her:

"Well, I am astonished! And no mortal can hold you responsible. That is certain. You are as innocent as the babe unborn. It is all a great pity. Such a nice house — and his family —" she murmured regretfully. "There's not a girl I know who would n't jump at the chance. Still —"

"Is my German all right? Is it phrasey and longwinded enough?"

"It is very pretty. It is always pretty."

"This is a different matter from ordinary German. It would not make me happy to have to write this in English," Monica returned with a faint smile.

"I'm sure he will think it very nice," the old lady assured her innocently, "fastidious as he is, being a professor —"

"I do not need to ask you never to allude to this to me or to any one. It is so very painful."

"I would not take it so hard, my dear. After all, it is only what must happen now and then to pretty girls."

"No, no. Not this. There was no reason for this," Monica rejoined, her face sombre and pained.

"To be sure; it makes it doubly weighty, he being so learned," the Frau Professor nodded wisely in complete uncomprehension, her traditional veneration for him vibrating with honest sympathy for Monica. "To think of all the valuable time he wasted sending advice to you in Italy."

Monica drew a long breath.

"There is one good thing," she returned rather curtly. "This is the end."

"Yes," sighed the Frau Professor, "the end indeed."

Three days after this presumable conclusion of the whole matter, Monica received a letter from Professor Steiner. The head of Medusa could hardly have petrified her more.

"Is the man mad?" she asked, as one does, attaching no real meaning to the words.

He confided to her in veiled and delicate

language that he by no means entertained the prevalent prosaic and vulgar conception of marriage. Could not Miss Randolph, reassured by this pure ideality of sentiment, deign to reconsider her decision, consent to merely embellish his life, to adorn his study as it were, and thus endow with vitality the beautiful vision which had hovered over his lonely path in Greece and Italy and which would never again leave him while he lived.

With burning cheeks, no solicitude as to style, and no desire to discuss this extraordinary moonshine proposal with any mortal, Monica presented in the third person her compliments to Professor Steiner, and begged to state that her decision of a few days since was absolutely unconditional, irrevocable, and final. It occurred to her that one such adjective would suffice for most men, but it was a slight relief to hurl the three at him, to write them with bold precipitation, and to affix to her envelope a rather masculine seal stamped with her grandfather's large onyx ring. After which, brief foolish tears suffused her eyes.

"I wish I had a brother!" she thought helplessly. "The man makes me quite silly. This will never do." She wiped her eyes, set her lips, and went to work manfully. Beside

the New York *Panyphone*, she was now working for the Chicago *Unicum*, which paid generously.

Three days later came a communication from Professor Heinrich Steiner.

"This is persecution!" cried Monica, and asked herself whether she should not return the letter unopened, but read it notwithstanding, with a vague curiosity and a shiver of apprehension, to see what enormity it might contain.

It requested her to have the kindness to inform him whether it were true, as he had heard, that she was about to marry a certain Frenchman. Professor Steiner could never endure the pain of seeing her on the arm of another man. In case she entertained this intention, he had determined, although most agreeably situated at the Gymnasium, and naturally more comfortable than elsewhere in his own house and among his own family and influential connections, to apply for a position in the Gymnasium at Leipzig. He begged her to acquaint him without delay and with perfect confidence in his discretion, with the truth.

Monica now lost her temper. She could not at once decide what Frenchman was dragged into this affair. She knew several

agreeable Frenchmen — a marquis, a consul, a professor, all wholly innocent of matrimonial designs so far as she was concerned. She imagined upon the whole it must be the professor. He had once lent her some nice books. But the marquis had picked up her fan, and had sent her flowers on New Year's Day. No, it was probably the professor. In plain English, what business was it of Professor Steiner? And what a preposterous mixture! The bit of sincere feeling, the house, the family, the connections, and the practical question of the professorship in Leipzig, all marching up in grotesque array.

She laughed nervously.

"It is not worth while to take him seriously, I am ashamed that he exasperates me so. Besides, there can be no doubt: this is really the end. Beyond this even he cannot go."

Seizing her pen, somewhat trained now in the service of *The Panyphone* and *The Unicorn*, she wrote approximately as follows: She would deplore being to any man the innocent cause of his exile from home and desirable associations. Professor Steiner need make no change whatever in his habits of life on her account. He could indeed do her no greater service than to leave her henceforth altogether

out of his calculations. Nothing was farther from her thoughts than marriage with any person in that region, and, if it would be any satisfaction to him he was welcome to it—with any one whomsoever in Europe, Asia, Africa, or North or South America. She ventured now, having nothing whatever to communicate farther, to rely upon the complete cessation of the correspondence.

Her somewhat fiery defiant and foolish enumeration of the geographical divisions of the earth's surface, may not be countenanced by the Ladies' Complete Letter-Writer, under the rubric Rejected Addresses. But it must be remembered in extenuation, her pen was rapid, her spirit not naturally slow, and great was her provocation. A wiser head than hers may grow bewildered and desperate in similar circumstances, and reckless in defence. Once more she availed herself of the moral support—it seemed to be all she had—of her grandfather's massive seal-ring with the crest that was born, not made.

"What is old Pinky doing in these days?" Elizabeth inquired maliciously.

"How should I know? I never see him."

"Poor Bob says he shall be awfully glad to get into the next class and out of Professor

Steiner's clutches. Of course the boy hardly knows how to shake him off. He insists upon riding and walking with him continually. Bob says it is no end tedious, and he never has any fun now with the other fellows. On their rides Professor Steiner stares silently into space, or asks questions about you."

"Which must be exceedingly entertaining to Bob," Monica said uneasily. "But his holidays begin soon."

"He looked very dejected this morning. He said Professor Steiner was going to write to him during the vacation."

"Poor little Bob!"

The Lorings had asked her to spend a couple of months at their country place, a roomy old house which, with its historical associations, legends, ghost, and delightful surroundings, Mr. Loring had bought cheap of an impoverished and nearly extinct noble family. It was a hill and lake country, sweet with the breath of the Black Forest. In the village inn Eleanor, Elizabeth, Robert, and a group of friends took up their abode. Boats, wheels, and horses provided perpetual motion. The cool woodpaths and the long hot white roads marked by tall poplar-trees seemed alive with bright and swift silhouettes.

Monica could run into town in an hour by rail, whenever her personal presence seemed desirable in *The Nosegay* office. She liked the constant companionship of Elizabeth and Eleanor. "We are all three waifs and strays," she thought. "Each has her secret burden." They bore their burdens gallantly in those weeks, it is but fair to say. They took them rowing and swimming, they galloped them across country, they went spinning with them on bicycles, they climbed long hills on foot — they made hay with the peasants and rode home on the funny little carts; and after these innocent dissipations sometimes in the dusk and quiet of evening, the burdens would take their revenge for all the giddy jolting and would oppress the trio with a sombre heaviness of spirit. They would then philosophize in dark disconnected hints — or sit silent and listless until Elizabeth revived them with a bit of cynical wisdom, or Mr. Loring would come to have a tough theological tussle with Monica.

Meanwhile, clever little Eleanor was writing an essay upon South German dialects, and Monica was studying her peasant friends, looking into their manner of life, their work, their earnings, their food, their crops, their hardships, their limitations, their love-making and

their marriages — particularly the last two themes. A peasantry with so long a pedigree is an aristocracy like any other. Monica had long since recovered from that optical illusion peculiar to the amiable foreigner inclined at the outset to regard as through an inverted telescope a German red-roofed hamlet as a sort of child's toy village and its men and women as promenading dolls. She was aware of their human proportions, and discovered each day more sense and mother wit in their simplicity. She observed them and their conditions merely because they interested her and she enjoyed talking with them, but as yet, unfortunately, *The Panyphone* and *The Unicum* profited little from her data. Flowers and froth still predominated in her writings for the eye of the public.

Elizabeth usually interfered as much as was possible — and great were her resources in the field of teasing — with their sensible work in any direction. Having wearied and annoyed them sufficiently, she would sing like an angel until they adored her. Lieutenant Uhlefeldt spent two days in the village. She treated him no better than them, but after he was gone, she had long silent fits or was irritable as at first in Italy.

During that entire summer, Monica received but one small note from Keith. It seemed to her, if she could understand it she could bear it better. If she should go home and see him face to face? But if he did not care to see her? Was that possible? The thought made her chilly round the heart. But he never answered her. He seemed not to see or hear what she said. She was not resigned. She clung fast. But she wrote little, from pure discouragement and bewilderment, not from wounded pride. When she was most homesick and desperate, she would usually go off on a long bicycle ride with Bob. Women with heartaches used to sit in stuffy little bowers and tarnish their gold embroidery with tears. Men with heartaches could go to the wars, a far more healthful diversion. But woman has come forth from her stuffy little bower — like the genius from the bottle — and no power can thrust her back. Future generations will rise up and call her blessed that she, after centuries of slumber, awoke to the cheerful truth that mental work, air, and exercise are no less womanly and chaste than immoderate moaning and stitching.

Professor Steiner was trying the air of the High Engadine for his health. He wrote to

Bob twice a week, giving the boy elaborate descriptions of Alpine scenery, which he skipped, and messages to Monica, which he roguishly delivered. She heard them in silence and with a haughty stare of incredulity, which made Bob laugh.

In the early autumn they returned to town. Rob McCarroll in the natural course of things passed on to the next class, and exulted that he was now free from his incubus. His rejoicing was premature.

Professor Steiner wrote a long letter not to Elizabeth, but singularly enough to Monica, desiring to continue his rides with Rob, formally proposing to adopt the boy legally, and having resigned all hope of domesticity he desired this consolation.

Monica with no comment passed the document over to Elizabeth, who did not scruple to express her indignation.

"Adopt my Robert, will he! The impertinent puppy! What has Robert McCarroll, the sixteenth of his name, to do with old Pinky's lost domesticity? Monica, what is the matter with the man? Wait. I'll give him a dose."

Which she did, then and there. Monica watched her with a curious expression and a very human sense of satisfaction. This time it

was Elizabeth's turn to flush and look uncomfortable.

"How is that for a quietus?"

"I suppose you know that it is very impertinent," suggested Monica, it must be confessed without disapproval.

"So was he. Shall I be polite to a man who proposes to kidnap a child?"

Monica laughed, rather exhilarated by Elizabeth's wrath, and said lightly:

"Send it then. It is strong, and I hope it will prove efficacious."

In that pleasant autumn weather Monica and Elizabeth were riding perhaps once in the week with Leo Uhlefeldt and Mr. Forsyth, an English attaché. They would select some rather distant village, meet the old Baron von Uhlefeldt there, and take supper merrily under his suave protection. By what magic Leo induced him to countenance these few rides, and receive Elizabeth with such amiability, Monica never understood. Perhaps Leo had given up an extra race-horse or made some similar stupendous sacrifice. At all events, the old baron was always on the spot, gallant, debonair, and kind, charmed with Elizabeth in every way except, as subsequent events proved, in the rôle of daughter-in-law. She took the little pleasure parties

as they came, and, being shrewd behind her levity, drew no erroneous conclusions. After the unlimited freedom of the summer, it was delightful to her and Monica to mount spirited animals, and escorted by bright-faced cavaliers, feel the cool air strike the cheek and hear the splendid rhythm of five horses' hoofs in long steady trot out through the shady park into clear country ways.

The day after the first of these excursions, Monica received a letter from Professor Steiner, who courteously, and as if there were no imaginable reason why he should not write to her, proposed himself as cavalier and escort on her riding parties. Nothing, he affably remarked, would afford him more sincere pleasure than to point out to Miss Randolph and her friend Miss McCarroll the beauties of the landscape and the points of historical interest in that region, and no one, he ventured to flatter himself was better acquainted than he with his native country.

"I will never write a word to the man again, and I will not read his letters," Monica now declared to the Frau Professor, who of her own free will undertook to bring him to reason with a little mild and motherly expostulation, and called upon him at the

Gymnasium for this purpose. She returned much elated. He had seemed overjoyed to see her, asked repeatedly if Miss Randolph had sent her, agreed eagerly with all that she said, begged her to give his best regards to Miss Randolph, and to assure her he was in every way at her service, regretted if in his zeal his letters had seemed too frequent, and hoped the Frau Professor would honor him with a speedy repetition of her visit, held himself entirely at her orders and would, at any hour she would name, present himself at her house.

"He was exceedingly polite, not at all importunate, and I really think, my dear, you will have no more trouble," she concluded.

But Monica's heart sank. She foresaw that Frau Erhardt's well-meant intervention would inflame him like direct encouragement. It was now October, and his letters began to snow and drift upon her like one of the plagues of Egypt. One, two, sometimes three in a day. She undertook to return them unopened. But beside feeling a strong aversion to even this tacit and repressive form of communication with him, she thought that she perceived a distinct response in larger, heavier and more frequent letters, every time that her

handwriting readdressed one of his envelopes. She therefore decided to be absolutely passive and endure what she saw no way to avoid. No doubt in the course of human events he would tire of this fruitless senseless pursuit. She tossed each letter as it came into a box and grimly turned a key on the uninviting mystery.

But poor little Rob McCarroll was also cursed with the plague of letters, if not so mercilessly as she, yet frequent and harassing enough for a school-boy. Professor Steiner expressed himself as extremely hurt and pained by the ingratitude of his young friend, who would no longer ride with him or come down to his house to supper. Rob begged off as well as he could, pleaded his new duties and new divisions of time, all of which was quite true, and added frankly, besides he had promised some fellows to ride with them. But his arguments had no weight with Professor Steiner, who pushed them aside and re-began his plaint. One day he accosted the boy in the playground and said he had insulted him and must give him satisfaction. Rob being an obliging child replied politely that he should be only happy, if the Professor would only wait until he could learn

how to fight duels, that none of the fellows of his class knew how yet.

Elizabeth now interfered. She made her second appearance in that little room in the Gymnasium, and was prepared to request Professor Steiner in the most forcible language of her vocabulary to cease to molest her brother.

"Monica," she said excitedly as she returned from her unsuccessful quest, "you know I was not afraid, you know I was fierce. Of course one is never so fierce before the enemy as behind his back. Still you know me, you believe I was fierce?"

"You were very fierce," Monica assured her warmly.

"Well, he disarmed me. He was in the seventh heaven of delight. He would not listen to a word I said about Bob. He insisted upon regarding me as your envoy. He sent you all sorts of voluble messages. I could do nothing with him. I was helpless. The man is most eccentric. I think he has a bee in his bonnet."

"I am sure he has," Monica agreed, but neither felt the sinister meaning of her own words.

Every day the letters came and were de-

posited in the locked box. Sometimes Rob brought them, when they were not in envelopes but folded in queer shapes, boats, stars, and flowers. They made Monica feel quite ill, but she said nothing more. She had at times a certain donkey-like patience and it was not easy for her to complain long in one key. She often asked herself if there were absolutely nothing to be done. But the fact that the man had made her a proposal of marriage precluded any appeal for advice or help from stern men. At least it seemed so to her. It was a part of her traditions. His letters were an assault like stones, but she did not know how to defend herself or to betray him. It will be observed that Monica was sometimes lamentably dense.

The mere arrival of letters that one has made up one's mind not to read, may seem a trifling matter. In these circumstances it was to Monica an oppression, an outrage, an incursion upon her personal freedom. She was tempted to burn them in disgust, but some warning instinct restrained her, and she kept them all, hoarded as carefully as Keith's. The irony of a flood of letters from this so repugnant source, when her heart was famishing for letters, only for letters, from over the sea!

A relief to sombre meditations were the Saturday rides which continued into November. A horse to one who loves him is a cure for many ills. Upon the old baron devolved the agreeable responsibility of choosing the inn and ordering their supper. He possessed talent for this office, and surprised them with the variety and elasticity of his appointments. It was a Thursday. That week Monica had received four or five letters a day from Professor Steiner, and felt like a hunted animal. Rob reported that the professor was not well, not in town, the boys in his class said. However that was, every post brought a letter from him. "When God wills, all winds bring rain," she thought wearily.

That evening Elizabeth announced that they would start as early as two o'clock on Saturday, and ride to the Rosenhof. She was moody and fitful, and finally said: "I am afraid it is the last ride. Never mind. We'll have a revel and die game." Monica asked no questions, but thought she understood.

On Friday morning came a letter from Professor Steiner, and across the envelope was written, *For God's sake read this!* Monica read it.

It asked in a sort of frenzy why she was so

cruel? Why she treated him with silent contempt? How had he deserved her scorn? Why was he alone unworthy of any kindness? He had been begging her for weeks now to ride with him. She rode with other men. Why not, then, with him? Was he not a man of gentle associations? Was he not fit for the society of ladies? And she who looked so kind, so good, she whose sweet face haunted him day and night, how could she be so hard, so merciless? For the last time he begged her to have pity. She did not dream the harm she was doing, the incalculable, fatal harm. If she had a woman's heart within her breast, he begged her to ride with him on Saturday, and to send her answer to his house. For the last time he begged her to accede to his request — to prevent unspeakable anguish, to avert a horrible catastrophe.

Monica groaned aloud, yet did not comprehend. Had she been a psychic expert she would have known how to interpret both the handwriting, and the broken, irrational reproaches. But she was wholly without knowledge of insanity, and towards no other frailty of our poor mortal bodies, is the laity so altogether helplessly and vastly ignorant.

This man had been to Monica from the

first, let it be said without heartlessness — a monstrosity. Unnatural, indelicate, repugnant, impossible, was his whole course in her estimation. She had endured much from him. She had done her best to bear it quietly. This letter was like all the rest, but intensified, gaining in gloomy horror. She felt wretched, full of vague foreboding, but she was accustomed to take herself to task for nervousness. She said nothing about the letter, which she locked immediately into the box, now so full the cover would hardly shut.

“He has tried unfair means with me from the first. Now it is melodrama. I cannot answer him. I did wrong to read the letter. No doubt some of the others are quite as bad.” Still she felt powerfully depressed.

On Friday evening Bob McCarroll brought the perturbing news that Professor Steiner was staying for a few days at the Rosenhof. At least Bob thought that was the name. He had not heard quite distinctly. There were so many little inns called some kind of a Hof: Bienenhof — Blumenhof — Lindenhof. He could not positively say it was Rosenhof.

Monica stared at him in wretched silence. Elizabeth cried:

“Of course it is not Rosenhof, you foolish

Bob! Why should even that kill-joy alight upon exactly our picnic? I do not believe it."

"Well, I'll find out exactly to-morrow morning and tell you in time," Rob promised cheerfully. "I really did not pay attention. Beth did not tell me until to-night where you would ride, and then suddenly it seemed to me the fellows said Steiner was staying at the Rosenhof, but it may be all my fancy."

"Why should the wretch be out there?" demanded Elizabeth. "Of course it is your fancy."

"I always think he's everywhere," Rob admitted. "He makes a fellow so uncomfortable, you know. But he was awfully nice to me at first. He told me no end of fine things. That is why I don't know what to make of him when he acts so queer. I'd like him again if he would n't bother me," the boy said rather dolefully.

"Elizabeth, I think we'd better give up the ride to-morrow altogether," Monica proposed with decision. "If there is the faintest possibility of meeting that man at the Rosenhof, we cannot go there. And it seems to me we'd better not ride in any direction. I cannot explain why things look 'lurid,' as you say, to me. But I have an instinct it is better to

remain at home. If you will write to Lieutenant von Uhlefeldt, I will attend to Mr. Forsyth."

"How can you attach so much importance to a thing Bob himself says he only half heard? For my part I cry no quarter to Pinky. He may be at the Rosenhof with his stare, his rosy locks, his red nose and his pearl-gray trousers. I should pay no more heed to him than to a fly on the window-pane. I do not understand you, Monica."

"I would not go for all the world if he were there," said Monica vehemently.

"He is not there, I tell you, great soft-hearted baby! He is in his house in Park Street. Bob, run out and be nice to the Frau Professor. Monica, it is the last ride, the very last! Be good and dear! Some day I will tell you things. I know you love me. I want to go to-morrow. You surely are not going to sacrifice me to that old ghoul?"

"I cannot tell you all I know and feel and dread," replied Monica. "I will simply say I am greatly distressed. I do not pretend to understand why I fear that man. But I have a great horror of everything concerning him. He has troubled me rather more than you know."

"Beast!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

"He has troubled me more than I like to admit. It seems a sort of weakness to suffer so for people to whom one is indifferent. I would not once have believed it possible. And I presume I exaggerate, that I am morbid. When one thinks of a thing continually —"

"Of course! Nothing is more natural. I always tell you, you are too sensitive. But see, you dear sweet thing, I have my reasons for wanting to ride to-morrow. Don't desert me for a nervous apprehension. I beg you to go if you love me. It is the last time —" and Elizabeth clasped her with loving arms and pleaded with ardent voice and hungry eyes.

"I will ride somewhere with you to-morrow," Monica said, pushing the hair back from her forehead nervously, "since you wish it so sorely. For my part, I hardly know why, I would rather stay at home. But under no consideration, understand me well, will I ride to the Rosenhof if Professor Steiner is lurking anywhere in the neighborhood."

"He is not, you will see," laughed Elizabeth. "Only let a bore work long enough and he commands the very elect. You and Bob tremble at the very name of Pinky."

"Oh no, it is not that," protested Monica.

"But all the same you are right. I owe more to my affection for you than I owe to my repugnance toward him. You may depend upon me, dear, for your last ride. Of course we can easily avoid him."

Toward twelve o'clock on the Saturday morning Leo von Uhlefeldt had the honor to inquire if the young ladies were of one mind and all was in readiness. Elizabeth lightly alluded to Monica's scruples.

"But Steiner is certainly off color," the lieutenant asserted cheerfully. "A brother of his has already gone the same path. It is unfortunate, but what has it to do with us? We are not responsible for him. Meanwhile my father has telegraphed to the Rosenhof for supper. Papa hates to be thwarted even in little things. Of course there is still time to countermand the order—but papa has taken pains. And why indeed should one inquire as to the other guests in a country inn where one happens to sup?"

Monica replied that she should be immensely sorry to annoy the baron and interfere with his pleasant plans—and the pains he had taken for them all. She hoped, indeed, it would not be necessary. All depended however upon the news Rob should shortly

bring from school. She could only say, first and last, for her the Rosenhof was simply impossible, were even Professor Steiner's shadow there.

The lieutenant deprecated this serious view of things, Elizabeth jested valiantly, Monica persisted, and all waited for Robert, who presently ran in and announced breathlessly and with splendid security:

"It was all a fraud. He is not anywhere out of town. He is here. Half a dozen fellows in his own class told me that they have spoken with him this morning. So you can ride over the wide wide world."

No one doubted the authenticity of this information.

They set out at two o'clock in the cool air, with the merry rhythm of twenty crisp hoofs and the sound of bright voices and laughter. Making good time, all strong and able riders, they drew up toward five o'clock with a cheerful clatter before the portico of the little inn called the Rosenhof, where the old Baron von Uhlefeldt received them with a certain pride. They were indeed a goodly company.

Later, in the bright front room, the five sat at table and ate and drank and jested and laughed. The old baron was a jovial man,

fond of the society of young people. He was affable too, for which he greatly admired himself, to mine host, and praised with amiable patronage his fat capons and his wines. This should be the last of these little feasts, the old baron had decided. Elizabeth was a charming girl. Personally he liked her much. But it was out of the question. Leo must marry in his own set, in society as his father had done before him. That Leo's father had had a singularly uncomfortable matrimonial experience and not drawn a free breath in thirty years, hence was now revelling in his widowerhood, the old baron did not permit for an instant to influence his judgment. Florence Arco was the one. Leo had hung back long enough. The boy had taste. Elizabeth McCarroll was a fascinating sparkling witch. How pretty they both looked, bright eyes, bright cheeks, bright lips, all brightness from the crisp air. Well, this being the last little supper, it should be a success, it should be a real merry-making—and he turned gallantly to Elizabeth with a devotion that rivalled his son's.

Leo went out one instant to cast one glance at the horses, and by chance heard from a groom that Professor Steiner was staying at

the Rosenhof, that is, "He's here and he's not here. They say he's gone to town, and then you see him. And he's got a mighty queer eye, sir. If my dog had that eye, sir, I'd shoot him, sir."

This information gave young Uhlefeldt a sense of discomfort he could hardly explain. "It is rather awkward," he thought. "But we are here and we cannot help it. It will be all right if only the ladies suspect nothing. I'm afraid they would want to go instantly, and we should lose this last evening. The poor fellow must be quite daft," he said carelessly, and went back to the bright little room where all were in gay spirits and friendly and charming one with another and time sped swiftly, and Elizabeth sang, and the old baron was loath to let them go, and grew rather sentimental himself, as old boys of sixty-four are wont to do after a good supper with youth, beauty, and excellent wines, and it was after eight o'clock when the baron's victoria and the five horses were assembled in the little circle of light before the inn, and the grooms tramped about and swung lanterns and the beautiful eager animals leaped upon the bit.

From the dark window above, a poor distracted man looked upon the cheerful noisy

picture. In this tragedy all parts dovetailed as if demons had made the measurements.

The old baron rolled himself in his rugs and prepared to drive off in his victoria.

"Let Jeannette lead," he privately advised his son, "or there will be the devil to pay. One would think it was the horses that had had the champagne," he chuckled. "How the brutes dance!"

"They'll be all right as soon as we are off," returned Leo.

The ladies mounted. The men swung themselves into the saddles. The smart groom took his place.

"Give Jeannette her head, Miss Randolph, and talk to her, pet her," called the old baron.

"I know!" cried Monica joyfully, for she dearly loved a horse. Turning, she smiled back at him with confidence and a little gesture of farewell. The light of a groom's lantern gleamed upon her happy face.

Off into the dark night sped the swift riders. Far down the hard road resounded the rhythm of clattering hoofs.

The tortured man turned from the window. He lighted a candle and began to write unintelligible illegible mad words, among which afterwards some uncomprehending curi-

ous eye deciphered: "white vision" and "Greece" — while Monica, her heart unconscious and free, rode away in the night, exulted in the magnificent movement, felt intensely the joy of mere living, and listened to the happy rhythm of the light swift hoofs.

X

AUREL VON ARENBERG was not a model host. He was apt to have at his own table the manner of a polite but rather indifferent stranger. Very correct and elegant, but later than any of his guests would have dared to appear, he would stroll into his drawing-room with an air of bland irresponsibility as to the condition of the fish. At such moments some people, but not his wife, admired his angelic detachment.

Dinners occurred with relentless frequency at his house. This fact may partially excuse his obliviousness. Living among the deeper shadows of life, contending day in, day out, beyond his strength, beyond any man's strength, with the misery of aching bodies and helpless souls, it seemed to him a quite superfluous rite, not that Arco and Lobanow and Baretsky and other men with nothing to do should be continually dining at his house, but that he must dine there with them. He was a most mild judge of his fellow-creatures, and condemned their idleness no more than their rheumatism or any other imperfection of blood

and breeding. He liked these men fairly well, and homœopathic doses of their society he found not unpalatable. But he had long since renounced the sort of life they led, and his earnestness would not amalgamate with their utter aimlessness, which, however, seemed to Mélanie the one life worth leading. In the incessant and strong struggle, now tacit, now open, between husband and wife, she pulling toward, he resisting society, often he yielded against his better judgment, from a desire to have peace at any cost, and because he recognized sadly, helplessly, with self-reproach, that this woman at his side, yet so far from him, was no happier, no more satisfied than he. Less, indeed, for he loved his profession.

There was a distinct advantage he found in dining at home. It took far less time than when Mélanie dragged him to Arco's or Esterhazy's, or to a rout or something crowded and philanthropic, where a fashionable tenor sang, or to charity-bazaars or to aristocratic vaudevilles for the inundated and starving. So when he saw no escape, he flung himself dutifully into evening dress and rarely obtruded his thoughts upon his neighbors. One can get along very comfortably in society, no man knew better than he, without thoughts, without

attention, without direct response. He always slipped out unobserved as soon as possible, and the women looked about restlessly.

To-night he was wondering how early he could respectably get off. He must see a woman at the hospital before he slept. It had been a bad operation with unforeseen complications. He felt anxious. His part had gone well, but she was anæmic, had a weak heart, and little power of resistance. A sunny little woman nevertheless, with three children and a husband who adored her, — a big kind fellow, who shook like a reed when he left, but she had smiled. It seemed to Arenberg he must save her, must sustain that feeble, flickering flame. Some others too he ought to see without fail — the little Helm boys with diphtheria. Besides, he ought to write all night — several nights, if he hoped to clear away that pile of neglected work on his desk.

"How do you like Signorina Bartoletti?" asked Madame von Baretinsky at his right. "She dances well, one must admit, but it is a trifle gaunt, don't you think? It is difficult nowadays to find all virtues united in one *danseuse*: grace, shape, fire, and school. Virtues, did I say? Virtue is the last thing we exact of her."

"Why should she not be as virtuous as anybody else?" remarked Arenberg, mild and absent.

Presently he began to listen with attention: the woman with whom he instinctively, conscientiously, and systematically disagreed, the one woman on earth to whom he had ever been forced to speak with a certain brutality, the woman who was in divers ways his evil genius, his sister-in-law Orla, was haranguing the company.

"I know it to be a positive fact," she said, "the Randolph lured him on in every conceivable way."

Her voice was hard and sprightly, her eyes sparkled like jet beads. She was a pretty woman, small, thin, sharp, and despotic, with a wiry vivacity of manner, a temper which she scorned to control, no children, a docile husband, unsatisfied literary and insatiable social ambition, and a volatile following of fops.

"The ineffable insolence of womankind," thought Arenberg, contemplating her mildly. "How dare she say *the* Randolph?"

"As she is an American," continued Frau Selbitz, "and introduced at your house, Countess—"

"Oh, very well introduced, I assure you,"

returned the Countess von Arco. "Her people are of the best. But" — with a laugh — "pray don't hesitate on my account. I cannot be held responsible for all the indiscretions of my compatriots over here. It is a very deplorable affair, I believe. Everybody was talking about it coming out of church this morning."

Madame von Baretinsky wondered why Arenberg was softly laughing.

"It is scandalous," exclaimed Mélanie. "I hardly see how she can show her face here after this."

"Why not?" asked Baron Lobanow with a smile. "Nothing poses a woman like a suicide or a duel. There is but one reason why a woman should not show her face — ugliness — which is not Miss Randolph's crime."

"May I ask what is Miss Randolph's crime?" said Arenberg. "I should not take her for a very dangerous malefactor."

"It seems a man, that is to say a professor, has blown his brains out for her sweet sake," said Baron Baretinsky, twirling his long yellow moustaches. "For my part, with apologies to the company, I cannot believe that the world will miss him. There are so many pro-

fessors, and one does not count them, eh? One more or less is no great matter?"

"Sascha!" indulgently exclaimed his wife, ten years older than he and patient as a mother.

"I heard he took poison," said the Countess Alexa von Gerold.

"An overdose of chloral, I was told," Lobanow remarked.

"No, no, he shot himself with a revolver," declared Orla von Selbitz, with the authority of an eye-witness. "It made a terrible report which roused the house. He could only gasp a few words, her name, and then he died in the arms of the landlord. She went out there to meet him, it seems, and they had an exciting scene, in which he upbraided her for her heartlessness and told her she had ruined his existence, and he should bear his misery no longer."

Again Arenberg laughed softly, so softly that no one noticed.

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mélanie. "To first destroy a man's happiness and then his life!"

"Oh, she! She probably does not care at all. I never liked her appearance," Orla returned autocratically.

"I like her appearance uncommonly well,"

said Lobanow, "and if I may venture to be so bold, it seems to me the ladies go a little too fast."

"That they do!" laughed Baretinsky. "They always do."

"In Petersburg and in Paris such things often happen," remarked Madame von Baretinsky philosophically. Nothing discomposed her or interested her much if only her Sascha were well and amused, and for the character of his amusements she had boundless indulgence.

Arenberg turned from time to time a quiet, attentive face upon each speaker, meanwhile scientifically dissecting a bird, and drawing his own conclusions.

"This time," he thought, "it seems they have really immolated Iphigenia. This time Artemis has not interposed. It is a pity."

Baretinsky chuckled.

"It is odd, but always so. This thing happened yesterday, out of town. In point of fact, we don't know what happened. We know nothing about it. But every man of us is on the woman's side; every woman on the man's."

"That is quite right. That preserves the balance of power," Lobanow suggested.

Mélanie von Arenberg flashed a mute appeal at Count Arco under her dark lashes.

"I must confess I stand with the ladies," he hastened to say, with his weakly amiable smile.

"Of course you do," bluntly returned the countess. "I must say I find it shocking."

"But, Baron, I am not against Miss Randolph," the Countess von Gerold said to Baretinsky. "I think she must feel terribly distressed, and I am very sorry for her."

"Nor am I against her," Madame von Baretinsky remarked negligently. "Coquetry is not the worst thing in the world. Sometimes it is even amusing." She spoke as one who regarded it from the proscenium *loges* of life and through a glass, somewhat as she watched the caperings of Signorina Bartoletti.

"Now I think we have every reason to be grateful to her," Baretinsky declared. "In this dull place a sensation is doubly welcome. You know Heinrich Heine said it would be very difficult to be immoral here."

"I think Heine was mistaken," Lobanow returned dryly.

"Well, you ought to know," Baretinsky retorted low.

"Why do you suppose she came over

here?" Mélanie began suddenly. "I always think there must be some reason why they cannot live comfortably at home. Perhaps if we knew all — Of course we know why such as you came," turning to Countess Arco deferentially, at which Baretinsky and Lobanow exchanged an imperceptible smile with the eyes. For the Countess Arco had come over to buy a count, and a count she had bought.

"Why, the town is full of foreign girls studying every imaginable thing," protested Lobanow. "And why should they not?"

"No one is as conspicuous as she," Orla von Selbitz flung out witheringly.

Thus, under softly shaded lights, amid the shining of silver and glass, the glow of wine and bloom of flowers, women in charming toilettes, and men in genial evening mood, lightly discussed a tragic event of which, as Baretinsky suggested, they knew rather less than nothing.

Arenberg crumbled his bread absently with his slight and nervous hand, and with what Countess Alexa called that most seraphic air, which looked odd above a white cravat and much shirt front.

Finally he glanced round the table and said:

"No doubt I am dull, but I fail to perceive the slightest sense or connection in all these conflicting rumors, or how a shadow of reproach can touch the lady. Who was the man?"

"Steiner, Professor Steiner," his brother-in-law informed him.

"Ah!" and over Von Arenberg's quiet face passed a quick gleam, instantly followed by a shade of reserve and a little defensive droop of the eyelids.

"And her crime," laughed Baretinsky, "her black and awful crime is, he was in love with her."

All the men smiled broadly, even Count Arco.

"But you are quite unprincipled to defend her!" Mélanie broke out.

"Giesl!" Countess Arco warned her erring spouse.

"If you would really like to know the truth," Orla von Selbitz now announced with a kind of prickly heat, "perhaps I can enlighten you, Aurel. You men are very tolerant or lax — of course we know that. Still I suppose you have some conscience."

"Do not doubt us!" Baretinsky pleaded mincingly.

"We have hearts," urged Lobanow, "great hearts."

"Well, I hope you have some judgment still," she replied with coquettish provocation, for these men she reckoned in her train. Meeting Arenberg's calm gaze contemplating her attentively as if she were a new species of microbe, she stared back with hard bright eyes and continued with increased zest:

"Perhaps it is quite innocent to run after a man in the school where he is at work, and to correspond with him most intimately for months —"

"You saw the letters, Orla?" Arenberg inquired gently.

"Of course I did not, Aurel! Perhaps it is sweet and maidenly to receive a man's visits, and his flowers and books, pictures and other gifts, to encourage him to the top of his bent, go more than half way to meet him, walk with him, ride with him in the woods —"

"You met them on these pleasant excursions, Orla?" Arenberg asked most sweetly.

"What nonsense, Aurel! But I know for a positive fact that she has been riding with him and writing to him and playing cruelly with him. Riding in the woods!" she repeated, with defiant emphasis.

"Ah," rejoined Arenberg, placidly. "In the woods."

"Well, now he has made away with himself. Is that not proof enough for you?" she demanded triumphantly.

"Proof of something. I don't quite know of what, although I have my suspicions. Countess Alexa! have you mastered your wheel? Do you feel quite happy on it? I think most people look uncommonly miserable learning it. Why is that? Is it so very difficult?"

As they had their coffee and cigarettes in the drawing-room, Arenberg seemed to be there, well disposed, moving about among his guests, chatting with the men, saying something kind to Count Arco and to the Russian, and to Countess Alexa, who liked him much; but as she turned to look for him, he was gone.

He found the little woman at the hospital in a sinking condition, and worked over her until she revived somewhat. He looked at a few other serious cases, walked with young Flemming and Sister Seraphina in her snowy broad-winged cap down the dim ward, past restless sleepers and weary wakeful eyes which, seeing him unexpectedly, sought his

in pleading. It was only a slight man in evening dress who spoke here and there a low word, gave a grasp of the hand, a thoughtful, friendly look, a smile, or bent suddenly to search a sleeper's face, called for more light and stooped and looked again with sharp scrutiny. But to many his mere presence brought brief healing and hush, as if an angel were passing through the ward, and some poor souls, comforted, smiled and slept a little.

Very late that night Arenberg went slowly through a street which was far out of his course, looked up at some brightly-lighted windows and smiled ironically at the impulse which had brought him there and still was urging him to go in.

"She would probably take me for the executioner in person if I should appear at this hour. Miss Randolph may not even know. And I? I know nothing. Trust Orla to paint the devil himself blacker than black. But it looks to me like ugly business. Steiner's brother in an asylum for years — Steiner himself, I suspect, alcoholic. I must ask Dr. Frege. I suppose I am hardly called upon to play Ritter Toggenburg, or storm her castle to-night. But I should like

to talk with her, to help her if I could. Perhaps later. She will be very uncomfortable, I fear. Vivisection hurts, and we are apt to do it thoroughly here, particularly when we get hold of a foreigner." With a benevolent glance at the windows, he went on.

The tale of the suicide spread like a conflagration, assumed myriad shapes and enormous dimensions. It possessed all the conditions essential to a deep-rooted and far-reaching scandal destined to live and bear fruit. There was a certain lull in topics of interest just at this time: the court was conducting itself reasonably well, or at all events with wise precaution; there was nothing especially exciting in politics; no little schoolgirl had of late become infatuated with an actor; no scion of a noble house had married a ballet girl; no insults had been interchanged in Parliament; the antics of no burgomaster and life-long incumbent were monopolizing helpless jurists and an exasperated public; no banker had fled from justice; no officer had cheated at cards; no anarchist had murdered a prince; the coast was clear for Monica.

Doubtless at moments they exaggerated the importance of the scandal. What the world

does not know is quite as surprising as what it knows. We are all of far less significance than we imagine, and there is always a next-door neighbor who never heard of the ill conduct of our son or that our Aunt Maria, upon whom we reckoned, has basely left her money to our distant cousins. Still it is fair to state that this was a scandal of forty horsepower.

It grew and grew. It was not small on the Sunday, but on the Monday its own mother would not have recognized it. In that town of three or four hundred thousand inhabitants comparatively few persons knew Professor Steiner or Monica Randolph. But he was a fellow-townsmen, a member of the learned professions, had relatives in high military and cabinet circles, and a house of his own in Park Street. Thus the thrifty enumerated his merits. He had been led on, cajoled by infamous wiles, betrayed, and sacrificed; had suffered martyrdoms; was the victim of a generous and romantic passion, until, discovering the worthlessness of its object, his great heart broke. Thus, the sentimentalists. In highways and byways the matter was greedily discussed. Everybody knew everything for a positive fact. How, no one inquired.

Professor Steiner was promptly canonized in public sentiment. A Siegfried, a Baldur, a Marquis von Posa, he floated before the inflamed imagination of the foolish. No one demanded the truth either of the house of mourning or of Monica Randolph. But public sympathy was exclusively with the house of mourning, which, discreet, conventional, flanked by the Cabinet and the Army, held its peace with dignity, and told no tales. In cigar-shops, and barber-shops, and sausage-shops, in cafés, in beer-halls and clubs, at dinners, theatres, and balls, in court circles and on the market, Monica was grilled, broiled, and roasted. She was an American — and Americans were prone to evil as the sparks fly upward. How did she look? On this point reports differed. She was a sort of Helen of Troy. She was ugly beyond compare, but practised black arts that enchanted men. And she wrote books. Ah! Oh! Oh! Ah! According to Balzac, a woman's reputation for intellect rouses, even more than reputed beauty, the antagonism and mistrust of her own sex.

All the women turned their thumbs down: tender-hearted women who would not hurt a fly, but whose lives had been too comfortably

narrow, uneventful, and guarded from the first for them to be aught but conservative among themselves, timid, suspicious toward all strange things; canny mothers who decked out their daughters bravely and took them where they would be seen of men; prim little maids trained to exist for forms and conventions until they really believed that birth was invented for the sake of fine christenings and engagements for the ring and the congratulations, and death for imposing funeral processions; spinsters who secretly vowed never to forgive Monica their vicarious loss of that house in Park Street; elderly young women of the aristocracy who, at the tender age of thirty-three, being still unmarried, must simulate the soft helplessness of the blind kitten, and its ignorance of nature's laws; gay women, with stains upon the conscience, or haply destitute of that irksome monitor; women who had divorced themselves from husbands and abandoned children, solely to purchase with the blessing of the Church a coronet; women living in marriage without love, and women living in love without marriage—all of one accord, whatever their kind or degree, prayed:

God, I thank thee that I am not as this publican.

Meanwhile, as not infrequently happens, the person chiefly concerned did not suspect her ghastly notoriety, but ate and drank and slept and worked with cheerful unconsciousness of her ghoul and vampire attributes.

For nearly a week Professor Steiner's bombardment had ceased which was an unspeakable relief. "At last he sees how wrong it was," she hoped, and recovered the elasticity which had often failed under the long and grievous dispensation of the letters.

The Frau Professor watched her anxiously, and provided sauces and salads of surpassing quality and the best fruit procurable, and when Monica asked for the evening paper, it had accidentally been destroyed — a loss she was able to bear with equanimity. Elizabeth seemed to be in a state of poorly suppressed frenzy in which her mildest wish was that an earthquake would swallow the entire population, but her fits of startling eloquence were too frequent to rouse comment. Robert did not once show himself. Eleanor stole in and out, fine and soft as a Tanagra statuette, and asked with gentle but senseless reiterations if there were nothing she could do on *The Nosegay*.

But no one dared to break the news to Mo-

nica, and Mr. Loring, who might have been spokesman ex officio, had the influenza. The three decided however that they could not longer postpone the evil moment, since she might hear the facts roughly at any time.

A week after that ride to the Rosenhof Monica found Elizabeth and Eleanor awaiting her return in her room.

"Ah," she said brightly, "you here? That is good. I have made a great discovery which I think I must write to *The Panyphone*. Wait an instant." She took off her jacket and hat and dived for some heavy books of photographs on her lower shelves.

She was fresh from fast walking in the cool weather, and looked not a little ironical.

"You know, Elizabeth, how often we have wondered why the people, the plebs, stare so at foreigners here, even when we buy our gowns at their shops. You remember, Elizabeth?" she repeated, for Elizabeth was silent.

"Yes, yes, I remember."

"Now I should be sorry to flatter myself, but I have had the impression this afternoon that every man, woman, and child I met turned and stared at me. You know how the women sometimes stop short, and one hears the little shuffle of their feet on the pavement, and sees

with the back of one's head their devouring look of disapproval." She laughed, and, leaning over her desk, turned the large leaves of her photograph books.

"And it was not so in Italy, or in Vienna — now was it? It is not so in Paris or in London. They are large towns, of course, and this is a little place. But I thought to-day there must be a reason beyond that and beyond the great clannishness and conservatism of the people here. And I think I've found it, and it belongs to the Woman Question, Eleanor," she announced, still with the little ironical smile on her lips and mischief in her eyes.

"Yes, Monica. The Woman Question."

"It is the way we walk, and what they find unsympathetic is our backbones. In our backbones is a certain emancipation ; for you see it is simply impossible for women who ride and swim and row and cycle, to promenade curvature of the spine. Do you remember, Elizabeth, that the handsome Ferdinand asked us once why English women, meaning Americans also, all looked as if they had swallowed a ramrod? Now if you will glance at this St. Barbara and St. Elizabeth of Holbein. Lovely things ! Here is St. Ursula from the Cathedral of Cologne ; and this Cranach ; and this Annun-

ciation of Van Eyck; and this Maximilian and his Wife; here is a Kunigunde — I don't know by whom; and this Memling. I can find scores of them, but these are the ones that occur to me — ”

“ You see they all have deprecating backs. They are apologizing for something. I presume for being women. It is the mediæval attitude: the head drooping meekly forward, the chest retreating in hollow modesty, the stomach consequently a trifle protruded — which is not pretty — the hands folded in docility, and the backbone, the backbone, my dears, conforming submissively to all these signs of bondage — a “slimsy” article, as they say in shops.”

She took down a couple of books on art, searched still for examples, was obviously preparing her article aloud, for she jotted down some memoranda.

“ Now the German women being most exceedingly conservative, a wee bit Chinese, have retained more or less the submissive mediæval backbone, while we for some centuries have been gradually straightening and strengthening ours. I do not say, mind you, the weak pose prevails here exclusively. But it is the radical difference between us, of course; many

things follow in its wake. Continued into maturity, it makes for clumsiness. Submission? There are various kinds. A woman may have a submissive back, and a submissive intellect, and submissive traditions, and a very unsubmissive temper. Or, like you, Eleanor, she may have an unsubmissive intellect and a marvellously docile spirit. There's nothing at all submissive about you, Elizabeth, but you are very dear all the same, and your backbone is a beauty.

"Now I find the young girls here love'y, and some of the older women very handsome, but they do lack grace of movement, and I attribute it to the conservation of the mediæval backbone. That is my great discovery. I'm going to work it up with all its psychic concomitants. I think it will be too good for *The Panyphone*. I will try a magazine. You can do the learned part for me, Eleanor. *Anthropos* and all that. But why do you not look at the pictures?"

She turned toward them questioningly, smilingly, and waited. They had risen and regarded her with faces which she did not understand. The Frau Professor, hovering in the background, wiped her eyes.

"Oh, Monica," exclaimed Elizabeth sav-

agely, "if I could put my arms round you and take you off to the ends of the earth!"

Again the silence and suspense.

The animation faded from Monica's face. A great terror seized her. She took one step forward and grasped a high-backed chair. White and hardly audible, she asked:

"Is my mother dead?"

"Not that, you darling!" replied Eleanor, with a sob.

Monica's tense hands relaxed, she drew a deep breath, dropped into the chair, and after an instant said quietly:

"Then I can bear it. What is it?"

They told her. First one, then another spoke in shrinking, broken words. Each thought the other was making it too bad, but interrupting to rectify, to soften, made it worse. "Don't tell me any more," said Monica once or twice, then put straight questions and had no mercy on herself, until she knew all, until she saw both pictures clearly, the true one ghastly, fateful, but pleading piteously for compassion, the false one ghastlier still because colored by cruelty, calumny, and lies.

White, motionless, speechless, with closed eyes, she sat for a while struggling to comprehend, possessed by horror as if guilty of a

crime. Suddenly she started up and quickly put on her jacket and hat. Elizabeth and Eleanor watched her silently, but the Frau Professor who awaited tears, tea, and bed, said with some alarm:

"You are not going out, dear child?"

"I cannot breathe here," returned Monica.

"You do not want me?" asked Elizabeth.

Monica shook her head.

For this she had left Keith, for this! she thought, looking down from a dusky height upon the lights of the town stretching away in the long valley. Joy and love and home she had foregone because her dear ones, not she, trembled lest a breath of the world's censure should reach her. Alone she had come forth, for this! Her whole being was in uproar. She could scarce follow any thought.

Yet painfully she forced herself to trace every step of her acquaintanceship with Steiner. Sternly she examined herself, seeking her fault, if fault there were. "I may have blundered," she said, "but before God I am innocent. I am the sacrifice. I am the victim. No one else. Not even he." Yet remembering that distraught brain, its agony and despair, the sickening death of the man — and that dire vision never left her

an instant—his last pathetic effort to write to her, his last mad thought, for she alone knew the interpretation of the scrawl found near his bleeding body, her heart grew faint, she leaned upon the railing for support, and a pity for him was born in that hour, a pity so tender and so vast, it was strangely akin to the affection she could not grant him living.

She stood alone under the tranquil stars. No one passed but weary laborers and other simple, quiet folk. Far down the valley shone the myriad lights of the city.

“But you, pretty town among your hills, you owe me reparation,” her spirit cried in grief and passionate resentment. “You have been base and cruel to me. You have condemned me without trial. Even savages practise some crude form of justice, but you, with all your learning, your oratorical lofty talk of German truth and German faith and honor, and ideals, what have you done to me? Your forefathers were more benevolent and provided burning ploughshares. I could walk them this night! Your legends let heralds call and bugles blow and help be loudly summoned for traduced maids, and give them time to weep and pray until their mystic knights appear and save them gloriously. While not

a man of you has come to me and said in fairness: 'Tell me, what is the truth of this matter?' And no one knows the truth. Ah, that is hard!

"But I want no rescuing knight, no protection, no chivalry. I crave only justice. Not because I am a woman should some of you have taken the trouble to ascertain the facts. I am a fellow-creature accused of a foul crime. You charge me with the cruel death of this man, with a kind of cold-blooded, infamous murder, and you have dared with unanimity and with the swift swoop of the bird of prey to pronounce me — unheard and undefended — guilty.

"But you are guilty. Not I. Not he. You. You trail my good name in the dust. You wound me to the death. But before the tribunal of eternal justice, I stand here and arraign you. Charge and countercharge. God hears." Like a gleam of light from a purer world flashed into her misery the proud thought:

"It is better so. Better be harmed than to harm. Better suffer through their lies than be guilty, if in the slightest degree, of the crimes they allege against me, though no man suspect."

For an instant her smile was the smile of the conqueror.

Sadly she gazed down the valley.

"I was so fond of you, you pretty town. I was lonely when I came. I thought you kind. I was grateful for every bounty—for your music, your pictures, and your forests. Your simplest folk seemed so wholesome, honest, and good. I liked you for your young children's sake and for your tenderness to them. I liked you—better than I knew. And you have stabbed me to the heart. Why? Because a man I hardly knew went mad and died. Is that a reason?"

But even as she reproached it in bitterness, she was unconsciously caring for the place with deeper attachment than before; for sorrow welds faster than joy. She never ceased to love that town, and the time came when she forgave it. That was her revenge.

She was lonely, strangely lonely in this tragedy. If but one soul knew the truth! Her mother? It would break her heart. Keith? Ah, no! If he did not need her letters for his joy she would not burden him with her sorrow. Yet he was generous, he would be grieved for any one in her plight; he would be tender to her if he were near; he would comfort her

with the old comfort; but she could not tell him this; time and the ocean and something she did not comprehend were between them. She shivered, and sobbed without tears.

Suddenly an idea, which for a brief moment seemed clever, occurred to her. She would call with those letters in her hands upon the Cabinet Minister to whom Professor Steiner had alluded. She would say:

"Sir, you are wise and shrewd. Here are these letters. Here am I. Read them. Cross-examine me."

But ah, how futile and painful to pore over the convincing testimony of those insane pages! And to what end? His own family surely needed no proof of the poor man's condition. They knew it best, had known it longest, had suffered most — till now.

Why then did they not come to her, and speak one word in kindness? Why did not some gentlewoman among them say, "We have heard of these unjust accusations. We fear our poor sufferer caused you much pain." It would be only human. But she would make no appeal to them. Nor would she weakly complain of the haunting pertinacity of a man now dead who, whatever misery he had occasioned her, was himself a victim of some mys-

terious congenital curse and had suffered the torments of the damned.

"Poor, poor soul!" she sighed. "Perhaps he knows now I was not cruel." If one were but sure of that! She wistfully contemplated the starry heavens. They told her nothing. Those superb stars may not be so tranquil as they look. They too must have their tragedies. One forgets we also are up there. From afar, we too, look shining and silvery and sublime. We too are moving on in majesty and inscrutable law.

She recalled the long chain of trifles that had led to the grief of this hour. A fountain played bravely in the winter sunlight. Therefore she had chanced to remain. Chanced? But was that too not law? the same law that presides at the nebulous birth of planets, and marshals the evolutions of heavenly hosts, and ushers in the spring, and tints the violet, and beckons the leaping tides, and inspires the ardor of suns? Could law guide her wandering feet, yet not decree the movements of her soul? Must there not be one life, one love in the universe? Could law exist for the lifeless molecules, yet not for the soul that suffers? But were there lifeless molecules? Was not everywhere imprisoned soul? And the soul

that suffers — the human soul — that has passed beyond the dumb soul in stones, and the soul that lurks in the cells of flowers — and the still brother-soul of trees — shall it find no rest? Shall there be calm and poise for all these, laws of birth and growth and decay, of attraction and repulsion, laws for the mightiest and tiniest movement of things — yet none for the movement of events, for the march of our soul histories? Law for that brain-disease, but only chance for the man's soul-pain — and hers? Blind chance had planned all the acts of that well-knit tragedy:

Never! Ah, no! There was meaning in the meanest thing, a reason — a purpose then in even this anguish. Not a sparrow falls to the ground. Every hair of your head is numbered. In the hollow of His hand. Were not the sweet old sayings equally true in science as in the older faith?

Ah, she believed in the pregnant purpose of the ages. She believed all worlds visible and invisible, and all humanities were moving toward some far-off, divine event; though mountains trembled and moons paled, law and love should endure. Sometimes, indeed, alone in the night, she had her flashes of inspiration,

divination — prophecy. She believed no longer — she *knew*!

But now, in her pain, as her thoughts flitted like troubled birds in the dusk hither and thither between earth and heaven, she wished she were great, and strong, and sure, so that the odium were naught to her, instead of causing her to shrink and writhe; wished she were not all alone yet fashioned to crave so sorely warmth and the nearer comfort, fond sympathy, subtle comprehension, the cares of sweet breath and clinging lips, and all the dear devices of close, close love.

Oh, the irony! This horror that had come into her life was also love — caricatured, perverted, and diseased — but love still. For that tortured soul, through all the steady progress of pathological symptoms, sought ever, in endless, retreating mirage, an unattainable ideal — and what is that but love?

Yet why must this have come to her, she moaned. Why? Was it the Karma the Buddhists teach? In some past age had she done this man a hideous wrong? Hideous indeed, or the expiation were less merciless.

"It may well be," she sighed, "and if I knew it, I could bear this more bravely, for it would be only justice."

In her confused gropings and stumblings the perception of eternal law ruling the tragic doom of the man and ordaining her suffering and sacrifice was her one support. But as she absently noted the lines of garish electric lights intersecting the golden yellow glow of gas, and, to her wonderment, could not determine the street cutting through the valley like the flash of a sabre — for thus benevolent nature interposes layers of vapid thoughts in heavily charged minds, to prevent too stunning explosions, her pain was too great, her sense of wrong too deep, her philosophy not yet large enough for her to pardon the town that had immolated her. Not yet did she comprehend that it, too, had acted in ignorance, and only as it must.

As she entered her study, her three friends greeted her with good, glad smiles of relief.

"You have had no dinner, my child," began Frau Erhardt, rather choked.

"No," replied Monica, quietly. "I should rather like something warm. I am a little chilly. It is cool to-night."

The Frau Professor hastened from the room.

"Elizabeth!" said Monica significantly. The two looked in each other's eyes, and saw scenes that they longed to efface, and heard

echoes of impatient, audacious jests about trifles no longer comic, but fraught with sad dignity, errors inevitably expiated and forgiven.

"Yes, dear," Elizabeth answered very sweetly, for she knew it was her daring tongue that Monica feared. Never from that moment between these two was Professor Steiner's name or anything connected therewith mentioned.

Eleanor required no warning. She was all tact.

Frau Erhardt told Monica mournfully that night, the house would be lonely enough when she was gone, but it was of course unquestionably best for her.

"But I have not once thought of going away."

"You have so often said you might go any day. You never were rooted here. And now, it seemed to me, nothing could possibly keep you."

"Ah, yes; but now I must stay," said Monica, simply.

With Frau Erhardt also she never discussed the Steiner episode, and her manner effectually repressed all further disclosures. "He is dead, and I am slaughtered. Nothing can undo the facts. I cannot let them expatiate and weep over me. I cannot bear it."

She half thought she might like to discuss it quietly with Mr. Loring, but when that good man came, with a distinctly new distress upon his face, and looked at her apprehensively, uncertain how to begin, she with nervous precipitation headed him off:

"Dear Mr. Loring, I am so glad you are better. I want to talk with you about what they call the inutility of the Atonement."

Thus she succeeded practically and on every side in excluding from her daily intercourse the sad theme which persistently haunted her thoughts. What she had to bear, she bore in silence. Sometimes, in crowds, she saw coarse women stop and stare and gloat, and felt them whisper to one another the tale of her nefariousness. At first this made her gasp and quiver and set her heart a-beating fast, but human nature is supple and can adapt itself to much. She knew her friends would do what they could for her. But they were feeble indeed before the resolute denseness of public sentiment. This was a case where good burghers at their beer, who had never seen Steiner or her, knew everything to be, for a positive fact. No god could have convinced them of a flaw in their reckoning.

Happily for Monica, there soon ensued —

behind closed doors — a suit inculcating high personages, and teeming with revelations of so revolting a nature that society discreetly turned its fair head aside, while lending greedy ears. The Social Democrats not illogically held jubilee, proclaimed brutal truths, and some of their editors were merrily fined; but they were used to that. Shortly after, a group of noble lieutenants did her the favor to disgrace themselves, and some took sudden journeys, and some were commanded to distant garrisons, and others were actually cashiered, but softly — gingerly — with the consideration befitting their station and Suabian solidarity of sentiment, and with the lofty hocus-pocus of the court-martial. Society looked sanctimonious, as it whispered this painful matter, and felt its pillars shaking. The wicked Social Democrats shouted and flung up their hats, yet this too was a scandal behind closed doors.

A duel also befriended her. A major's sacred elbow was jostled by a civilian, in a crowd. Now, that is a thing that may not be. Hence the major shot the civilian, and his wife wept. They sent the major for a while to comfortable quarters in a fortress, and when he came back, he was invited to sit at meat at the king's table. Society drivelled a bit

over the duel, and more Social Democrats were merrily fined. Still the world said, an officer has no choice. He must protect his honor. And Monica marvelled, smiling the new smile she had learned.

"How fragile is the thing a man calls his honor! My honor, thank God, has more vitality."

Among all these more or less evanescent entertainments, Monica's case, having no closed doors or other privileges, held its own in bare-faced notoriety. It gradually crystallized into the town traditions, and attained in time the dignity of an evil classic. When people discussed her irreverently, as they dare to discuss even you and me, and wondered whether this or that, or the other, were true, somebody always cried in triumph: "Well, at all events, there was Steiner!"

While her wounds were fresh, and longer, Monica suffered keenly. One suffers in ignorance so much more than one need. Curiously enough, her regular work, which she still viewed more or less ironically, proved an humble but unfailing friend. More effectually than the voice of affection, it steadied her fluctuating moods, her inconsistent, hot, patient, rebellious, soaring, helpless nature.

Suddenly, out of the long silence, and written with trembling hand, came a rare message from her beloved old friend, Judge Trevor—a few strong words of love, of faith in her, an appeal to her courage and constancy.

Another unexpected friend deigned to lay a cooling hand upon her brow—the magnificent old pagan Goethe, who told her something to this effect:

What friends do with and for us, becomes a part of ourselves, since it strengthens and summons our personality. What enemies undertake against us, we do not assimilate, but experience merely, and reject, protecting ourselves as against frost, storm, rain, hail, or any other passing discomfort.

Nevertheless, above all things she craved comprehension. It was martyrdom for her to bear this grief alone. Yet, with a certain haughtiness she instinctively repelled the gentle loquacity of benevolent but impotent souls. One day she remembered Arenberg's thoughtful face. He looked as if he understood all things. He was a doctor, too, and she could show him the letters, without wrong to the poor wild heart that wrote them. Arenberg was mild, profound. She might dare to tell him all, as to a priest.

She went as far as his threshold, where she stepped back to yield precedence to a hollow-eyed man, dragging his legs miserably and clinging to his wife.

"I am ashamed to go in," thought Monica, "I am too well and strong. I am ashamed to go to a stranger, busy with such ills, and proclaim and thrust upon him my innocence. It is a low thing to always want to be understood. Let my innocence take care of itself."

XI

"It is very good of you to come in, Miss Randolph," said the handsome Ferdinand. "I wanted to call upon you, but cannot leave very well to-day, so I ventured to take the great liberty and give you the trouble."

"I am very willing to come," returned Monica, not without apprehension, for she remembered the last time they three sat in that private room.

"We are aching with curiosity," Elizabeth assured him. "Not awaiting anything so cheerful as a legacy, and being formally summoned by the Grand Mogul, we have not lost a moment."

"You are as welcome as the sunshine, but it is Miss Randolph whom —" he hesitated, smiling.

"In money matters she and I are one."

"It *is* only money?" inquired Monica, with vague anxiety.

"Only money," he repeated, laughing. "Is that the way to talk to a banker? Yes, it relates to money among other things. I presume I may speak before Miss McCarroll?"

"I presume you 'll have to," remarked that audacious young lady, leaning back comfortably and smiling at him.

"I have been requested to act as ambassador in what I regard as a matter of much importance. I have a message, a proposal to submit to you from one of your compatriots, who is much interested in you, and has written —"

At this point Monica's grave concentration relaxed.

"— written to me fully and confidentially."

"Go on," said Elizabeth, graciously. "You are a very imposing ambassador. You don't come to the point quite fast enough to suit me; but I suppose that would be *infra dig.*"

"Why should he write to you?" demanded Monica, pertinently, amused and puzzled that a publisher or an editor should set to work in this roundabout fashion.

"I will agree to whatever they want," she reflected, "unless it be a prize story handicapped with twenty-six conditions. It must be a very good offer, and dear mamma has a weakness, if not for purple, at least for fine linen."

"He anticipated that question on your part,

Miss Randolph," replied the banker, courteously. "There is, however, an explanation of his course. He was here some years ago. We had business relations together, — very agreeable relations. He is aware that I have the honor of your acquaintance. He knows I am in a position to give you exact information concerning him and his circumstances. In short, he believed a little preliminary conversation between us would be more practical and satisfactory — more business-like, he said — than a letter to you from a total stranger."

"Where is this singularly cautious and canny person," asked Monica, "and pray what does he want of me?"

"At the moment travelling in India, *en prince*."

In Monica's eyes appeared vast mystification; in Elizabeth's lurked a demon of mischief.

"Miss Randolph," continued the banker, rising instinctively to his full Viking height, his voice impressive, his face duly solemn, "this gentleman possesses a fortune of ten million dollars. I have the honor, in his name, to make you a formal proposal of marriage. He has seen your photograph. He

has met friends of yours. He knows your writings. He respects and admires you. He is confident that he understands your character. He would be proud to see you doing the honors of his house. You are, he declares, the one woman he wants. He is not young, it is true, — somewhat over fifty; but he — hm! — looks very well, well preserved, I should say — solid and cheerful, yes, quite so — ” the affable ambassador ran lightly over this dangerous ground — “and he is a man of business integrity, of great energy; a self-made man, as you Americans say, but an intelligent, well-informed, up-to-date man; and he declares it will be the proudest moment of his life when upon the wedding day he has the happiness of endowing you with one million dollars in your own right. He suggests a ‘Yes’ by telegraph would make some difference in his route, and particularly in his purchases.”

Elizabeth, with both elbows on the table, her handkerchief pressed hard against her mouth, watched the two with wicked eyes, and thought this moment was compensation for many trials, — even for uncles.

“My dear Miss Randolph — you are surely not displeased — offended — ? Have I been so unfortunate, so awkward?”

"I am," began Monica — "I am — and pained," but her astonishment and indignant protest spoke for themselves.

"If in any way I have —"

"It is not your fault, of course — but —"

"Then I am to tell him —"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing from me."

"But you will be obliged to say either yes or no."

Monica shook her head obstinately. But meeting his solicitous and surprised gaze, and those eyes above the handkerchief, her irate goddess-mien suddenly vanished and she deigned to laugh, which greatly relieved the banker.

"I will tell you, not him," she said, "that a man who wants to marry a woman would better come and take his chances like a man — whether he have ten millions or ten cents. And if I seemed ungracious just now —"

"I was quite inconsolable," he protested.

"You looked furious, Monica, — such a temper!"

"I am sorry. Of course one ought not to take anything so grotesque seriously. But, I assure you, at first I saw no humor in the

situation. It seemed to me a downright insult, — an outrage."

"But I am not exactly the man to convey insults to charming young ladies," suggested the banker, more gravely. "Of course it is an unusual thing. But you Americans are unusual. Ten million dollars are unusual also, permit me to assure you. Now, I don't want you to look at me again in that withering manner. But I should like to say a few things to you if I may, and be a good friend and counsellor, as I hope you consider me."

Monica extended a quick and cordial hand.

"Say anything you like."

"I am afraid you are a little romantic."

"A little!" muttered a voice behind the handkerchief.

"I don't think you regard the question in all lights. I am not a mercenary man. I flatter myself I am a fairly liberal man. But I beg you, seriously, to think twice before you reject this offer. To a woman like you it means power unlimited. All portals open before ten millions. All courts, all art treasures, a life as fascinating as fairyland is within your reach. And the good you can do to your fellow-creatures, — have you thought of that? I happen to know your instincts in

that respect. Our bank has a clever little bird-in-the-air. Think what charities, what blessings, you could sow broadcast! And the hearts comforted and the tears wiped away! And the children! What could you not do for children! I happen to know you are foolish over children — even dirty ones. So wonderful a future lies before you, and you have but to take one step to attain it."

"Oh, how I should like it," cried Monica, longingly allured and deeply stirred by these visions, — "how I should like it" — she gave a great sigh — "without the man!"

"Another thing. Even if his overtures are unsympathetic, would it in any respect compromise your dignity, should you simply allow him to come here and make your acquaintance? You give him no definite encouragement. You reserve your decision. But you might like him, you know. I assure you he is a very good sort."

"Bravo, ambassador!" murmured the stifled voice.

"I think," rejoined Monica, with dangerous sweetness, "he'd better buy himself a woman in countries where such merchandise is for sale."

"But, dear Miss Randolph —" he looked

grave, for he liked her, and thought her attitude most childish.

She smiled, and said no more. It seemed to her no words could indicate, if instinct were silent, what that man had done, and what he was.

"Tell him if he'd like me he may have me cheap," Elizabeth flung in startlingly. "A modest half-million is good enough for me."

"He could do worse," the banker stated, with deep barytone conviction.

"Don't you believe her," said Monica. "I know her better."

"But any one would take him," he insisted, with considerable discontent. "I shall still venture to write to you and give you his name and address. You may reconsider. I do not know one woman who would let this opportunity slip through her fingers."

"Ah, I think better of my sex," retorted Monica. "Thanks for all your interest and great patience, and I hope you will continue to like me a little, though I am not a nabob."

"Monica," began Elizabeth, with a serious air, when they were alone, "not every woman consciously achieves her epitaph. Yours is magnificent: *Here lies One who refused Ten Million Dollars.* Is that not grand in its

Spartan simplicity? Wait.' It is customary to accentuate the virtues of the departed. Call it pounds. *Here lies One who refused Ten Million Pounds.* That reads better. — 'Pounds' is so trenchant. We need not specify you were a woman. *One* is sufficient. No man on earth ever refused as much as that."

Monica's careless laughter was suddenly checked by a sombre shade of reminiscence, and she said, in her face and voice an appeal which Elizabeth found pathetic: —

"I really dare not jest, dear."

"We will jest all we like," declared Elizabeth, with sturdy defiance.

"It is immensely droll," Monica admitted, smiling in spite of herself.

"It is glorious. Do you suppose he is a pork-packer?"

"Not improbable. That solid, well-preserved, cheerful —"

"Self-made — business-like — up-to-date —"

"Very good sort."

After a silence, Elizabeth said:

"How perfectly one sees the old Turk! What are you thinking behind that 'thinker's brow'? Think aloud, Monica."

"I am wondering at his colossal *naïveté*."

"Your terms are mild."

"Oh, yes. It is really not worth while to waste much rhetoric on him. And I am speculating upon an astounding fact."

"Which is, O Solomon?"

"That the world would not think me an immoral woman should I telegraph 'Yes' to India to-day. The world and all churches would sanction my marriage with this man."

"Rather!"

"Which mainly confirms me in a conviction I have entertained for a long time, that conventional morality is an insidious form of vice. In a high civilization, so depraved, so impure a marriage could not be countenanced an instant. I suppose we do not even suspect how barbarous we still are."

"Hear, hear!"

"Elizabeth," Monica asked very thoughtfully, "why do odious and melodramatic things happen to me?"

"My dear, I do not know. I have often speculated upon that. No one looks more cool and remote than you."

"Nevertheless —"

"Huge tiles fall on your head. Why do you not write a book and call it *Bombs for the Lonely?* One ought to get the good, some-

how, out of undeserved miseries. I'd write them up!"

"Oh, it would be impossible to write personal matters," exclaimed Monica, with emphasis.

"Why? The public delights to get on the wrong scent. I have a friend in London who writes — really writes: books, not pot-boilers, my dear, like yours. She says when she draws vaguely on the unseen everybody recognizes and verifies her characters; she is vituperated in the newspapers, narrowly escapes a summons for libel, and is cut publicly by old friends. But when she consciously reflects reality, the very people she has sketched never suspect it."

"I would rather forget than chronicle some of my experiences. Still, you are right; nobody would believe them genuine."

"Oh, dear, no! They would praise your trained imagination. They would take you for a little Jules Verne."

Love affairs sometimes grow, like blackberries, in clusters. The season over-shadowed by that sinister experience, and not long after enlivened by the humorous episode of the narvely proffered millions, presented to Monica various problems of the heart, which,

being wholesome, sane, in the natural order of things, occasioned her considerable thought, but no consternation. It was socially a rather gay winter for her. She was much invited, — far more than before her plunge into public disfavor; but she was watched narrowly, particularly when talking with exceedingly clever men who interested her and roused her enthusiasm for a theme, an idea. She was often conscious, with a sudden chill, that women were seeking to discover the black arts with which she bewitched poor Steiner; and her animation, her warmth, the response upon her lip, would die away, blighted.

It was not for her enjoyment that she went out frequently. She granted that bright moments of sympathy may shine even in dull crowds: that the swift magnetic flash of recognition of our own kind may illumine them, — that pleasant sense of home-coming, when, after wearying about among indifferent people, we are greeted by the eyes and voice of a brother whom we never before had found.

But in general she cared not at all for the large gyrations of society, and gyrated herself merely to please her friends, who were inexorable in their demand that she should be

continually seen in the best houses. Old Excellenz Count Ehrenstein and the Countess insisted upon taking her everywhere; the Loring seemed moved by a similar desire; Countess Arco, after observing the pointed attentions of the Ehrensteins, Countess Gerold, and others, renewed her temporarily relaxed amiability; the Frau Professor would not countenance the refusal of the most ordinary invitation; even Elizabeth and Eleanor dragged Monica out, and all the world seemed in clamorous league against her peaceful evenings at home. She perceived their design, yielded to their solicitude, but asked herself how a suicide and false witness were to be rectified by the disclosure of a pair of evening shoulders and a reverence before His Royal Highness.

Mr. Loring told her she ought to keep a note-book and make studies of the exalted personages she met. He thought he perceived in her work the want of the note-book. The altitude of the note-book she never reached, and the exalted personages rarely interested her. They seemed to be rather sad and dull, and produced dulness, since until they made their august exit the young people could not dance.

Baron Lobanow, clever and artistic, in-

clined to be delicately mindful of her interests, advised her strongly not to neglect society. It also was of use to the artist, he asserted, partly because he believed this, partly because he liked to meet her. She, wondering, responded:—

“Not in dreams have I assumed the glorified name of artist.”

“Sometimes we entertain angels unawares,” he said kindly.

Which she thought graceful on his part, but continued in her heart to consider the circumstantial routine of society Danaid-toil, and to believe that she would have been happier and better off alone on a hill-top, under the stars, any hour that she ever passed in a crowded drawing-room. Stuffy gregariousness was to her a penance.

One compensation for much social tediousness was the music and the significance of foreign tongues. Life seemed richer where Russian, French, Hungarian, Spanish, English, Italian, and German followed one another in sparkling, chromatic succession. Sometimes she heard a bit of Greek and Japanese; there was picturesqueness too in the ever-varying national types that passed before her. Not an abundance of household

gods, not local dignities, seemed to her desirable, but to roam from land to land with the loved one, and to speak in many tongues; thus coming nearer to the hearts of strange folk, our brothers, whom we misjudge, not understanding their language, even as we misjudge those nearer friends, our horses and dogs, whose eloquent remarks to us we are too dull to interpret.

The uniforms, decorations and titles, were to her — be it whispered under the rose — nonsense. After all, it is but a later development of the wampum-and-feather taste, that European chieftains strut about, their breasts bedizened with bright bits of enamel and metal, materialized boasts of their prowess or of the favor of their sachem. Viewed in long perspective, say, when the historian of an enlightened future epoch shall contemplate our angry problems, our struggles out of and relapses into savagery, our cruelties, our darkness, dense, yet illumined by great guiding gleams of love and light, — surely these dangles on men's breasts will look altogether Comanche-like, no better, no worse.

At a reception where princes, ambassadors, nobles, dignitaries of all degrees were magnificent in gala, Monica, while demurely

responding to the amenities of a duke, whose manner was simplicity itself, but whose breast was pompous with trophies, coolly reflected:

"It is forbidden by common consent to say: 'This I did bravely on a certain day. I led the spirited charge of my brigade!' Or: 'I am a scholar; a scientist; an author; a painter; I have discovered, invented, commemorated, written, created something of worth.' The frank word is tabooed; men's tongues must simulate humility. But that no one, nevertheless, need fail to read the register of our perfections, the brave man, the artist, the scholar, pins upon his coat gay dangles which shall boast for him, since he has not the honesty to boast for himself. Those little medals and crosses worn by warriors to commemorate deeds on battlefields are merely neat modifications of the scalps of their enemies.

"Since war is wholly barbarous, barbaric and cruel mementoes of its horrors are, at least, explicable. But the scholar, the poet and painter? How, in all seriousness, can they deign to wear upon their breasts twinkling toys and gewgaws parading royal favor? What of worth may the monarch offer to the artist but gratitude and homage?"

But she was not altogether iconoclastic. She saw much to admire, — beauty and charm in women and men, and intellectual distinction, — for she met many famous people, and much to interest her, particularly in love affairs, her own and her neighbors'.

Mr. Forsythe was very persistent. She admitted a frank regard for him, which he, in his sensible and cheerful fashion, sought to persuade her was quite sufficient. Had she never known a deeper affection, she might have believed this, for she looked kindly upon his candid English face and admired many things in him. One short note came from Keith during that whole winter. Any friend might have written it. But it moved her mightily. It said, simply, he thought he ought to tell her she was doing better work. He had liked some things of hers of late. And she was touched and thrilled, and beyond all reason grateful, and glowed with happiness for the comfort of the tacit assurance that he still cared for her weal and woe. With unwonted temerity she resolved to do great things. But when a most parsimonious expression of approval of one man has this electric effect upon a woman, she cannot well marry another man, even though she regard

him with cordial and fraternal affection. At least, Monica could not.

They said, of course, she flirted unmercifully with him and led him on. If liking a man sincerely, finding him a charming comrade, being sure one could gladly welcome his sympathetic face and voice and quality of mind every day of one's life in honest friendliness, in free and simple companionship, be flirting, Monica flirted with Mr. Forsythe. There can be no doubt of that.

She missed him much when he left town, but not unsagaciously deemed it propitious that he had obtained another appointment before the arrival of her mother. Mrs. Randolph was coming without fail in April. Arthur Forsythe was a man of distinction, and of great expectations.

Lal Loring was another of her victims. It is quite preposterous that lads of nineteen should fall in love with women already six-and-twenty. But the lads do and will. Mother Nature has opposed no restrictions. On the contrary. Happily he was at home only in the holidays, but those were quite sufficiently frequent and long to enable him to cause Monica much bewilderment. Her grandmotherly airs he derided. The difference in

age was something too paltry to be mentioned, he asserted with fiery scorn, but took pains to cite historical instances which, in his opinion, sustained his suit. He was so inflammable, so much in earnest, so disdainful of reason, so nonsensical, such a good, merry fellow, withal, transformed unaccountably into this scowling, teeth-gnashing swain, Monica found it impossible to take him seriously, and sometimes was guilty of laughing, when he swore that he hated her, but speedily knelt at her feet and blubbered his remorse. If she then, in compassion ventured to put her hand on his curly and contrite head, for he was only a great boy, and in this crouching attitude not unlike a great dog begging for a pat, she found the proceeding dangerous.

Baron Lobanow's devotion, as befitted a man of the world of his discrimination, was not torrid and volcanic, but measured, graceful, merging indeed occasionally into a quasi-lover-like strain, which might have dismayed her had she not perceived its reassuring catholicity. He was analytic, sophisticated, a good art critic, professedly pessimistic, rather *fin de siècle*, and at heart an excellent man, very loyal to his friends.

He, also, benevolently desired to improve

Monica's mind. Her chief difficulty in his opinion was her ideals. Without ideals he felt convinced she would become a better writer. Ideals were out of date. Monica could not oblige him. She was at a loss to know how to eradicate them from her system. Had she followed the kind counsels of those who desired to pluck her imperfections from her, her small talent, like the *homme entre deux âges*, would now be entirely bald. However, she enjoyed with Lobanow exhilaratingly controversial discussions which reminded her of old days and pungent table-talk at Judge Trevor's.

Other men manifested more or less warm interest in Monica. Many experiences commanded her sympathy, her respect. Some few, with equal reason, roused less benign emotions. There are foolish and frivolous men everywhere, particularly loafing about thrones. Of no essential importance, they should perhaps be muzzled in hot weather.

This third winter of her absence was altogether a fertile season. Time had induced by no means resignation, but, in view of her utter powerlessness to change matters, a certain fluctuating patience in her attitude

toward Keith. She was less self-absorbed than in the time when she received and lived upon his letters and the reminiscence and dreams they reinvoked. She was older, and her startling and bitter experience of the autumn had opened her eyes to ugly facts, and doubtless caused her to observe all things in her range with far more honesty and thoroughness than before.

She had rich opportunity to study human nature, for at this period many fragments of lives were confided to her, — bits of tragedies, bits of farces, and love-stories partaking of tragedy and farce. Men twice her age, men of her own land and other lands, found it quite natural to relate to her their domestic infelicities, and she found it not unnatural to listen. Women were no less communicative. Occasionally she heard, with peculiar sentiments, and more diplomatic reserve than usually distinguished her, grievances — in unsuspected antiphony — of man and wife. Advise she could not, — no Solon could, — but she was a good listener, and speech sometimes relieves oppressed hearts. It began to be a matter of course to her that people should come in and with few preliminaries relate crass matrimonial discords and compromising mazes.

A couple of lieutenants, delightfully ingenuous and charming youths despite their detestable handiwork, and wildly in love with pretty American girls with obdurate fathers, implored her intercession and services as interpreter. She wrote letters for them with the gravity of a clerk. She had written similar effusions at home for a cook eminent in ministrations to the comfort and delight of her fellow-creatures, but guileless in orthography. "History repeats itself," she reflected, as the handsome young officers, one after the other, leaned anxiously over her writing-table. "They are noble in point of ancestors: Bridget in her treatment of meats, fowls, and game."

Ever nearer and closer grew her sympathy with Elizabeth and Eleanor. Without words she divined their griefs. In all possible ways they lovingly helped one another.

There could be no doubt something in her, she knew not what, induced reckless and exhaustive confidences. She cared vastly for people's troubles. They absorbed her at the moment utterly. She would grow chilly and faint, or generously indignant over the recitals of her penitents. She was foolish enough, although she knew better,

to long to interpose and set things straight. It would all be so simple, indeed, if only people would open their eyes, would not cling to vain idols after the true gods had passed.

XII

"GRETCHEN is my ideal of womanhood," Baron Baretinsky remarked to Monica as they sat in the Arcos' box at the theatre that evening. "My ideal of womanhood," he repeated, caressing his long moustache, and listening to himself with obvious pleasure; for sentiment, like truffles, he enjoyed, if for different reasons, rarely.

She looked with polite incredulity at the amiable worldling of lightest calibre, and Lobanow did not scruple to laugh outright.

"But I assure you I am in earnest. She is my ideal."

This was not a man with whom Monica cared to discuss an earnest theme, yet knowing that the radiant and triumphant purity of Gretchen's womanhood was not the element for which he was expressing this unwonted rapture, she permitted herself to respond dryly:

"But you would not have married her after the Fourth Act?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I merely asked if you would have married her after the Fourth Act."

Lobanow's smile was fairly Mephistophelian as he beheld Baretinsky's consternation. There was no doubt: the phenomenon had occurred; Baretinsky the *blagueur* was shocked. The most frivolous man regards some one subject reverently, has his *noli me tangere*. Baretinsky's was his social position.

"I marry her? No." After an instant, with increased emphasis, "*I?* Certainly not."

"Ah, indeed!" said Monica, quietly, and turned to speak to Countess Arco.

Lieutenant Uhlfeldt behind Florence Arco's chair was somewhat silent and dull. Florence looked listless and phlegmatic, perhaps vaguely wondering, if capable of wonder, what she had to do with it all, with the *loge*, the stage, life itself. Monica glanced at her kindly now and then, but treated Uhlfeldt as thin air.

On the following day Eleanor and Elizabeth being in Monica's study, where they were apt to spend odd half-hours, Elizabeth said abruptly:

"Don't you think Florence Arco looks like a little sheep?"

"I think she looks — as well as she can, dear."

"Yes, she looks like her father," Elizabeth retorted.

"Perhaps she looks like a little lamb," Monica amended, "gentle and inoffensive," but meeting Elizabeth's mute inquiry, hastened to change the subject, and narrated the little joust with the gay Russian.

"My compliments! I myself could have said nothing worse."

"It was rather impertinent, but he looked so self-sufficient and bland."

"Pertinent," said Eleanor, "but in his opinion immoral, at least highly improper."

"I do not defend it. Perhaps I should not have said it. But in that case ought I to have been there? Why should hundreds of men and women watch together a representation of the sublimest work of one of the world's geniuses, if it is unfitting for the women to have thoughts and express opinions upon it?"

"How often have I tried to impress upon you, dear Monica," called the recumbent Elizabeth from her sofa, "that a woman should have no thoughts at all. There is a Chinese proverb which I recommend to both of you: 'The chief virtue of woman is being without talent.'"

"Opinions!" Eleanor resumed. "Yes, but

accepted opinions. Baretinsky's opinions, one might call them categorically. He told me once, in his very debonair fashion, that he had some cousins studying in Zurich, but he disapproved of learned young ladies. I asked why. He said learning made them less loving. Woman's mission was to be loving and child-like. Then he ogled. I inquired if he observed any radical change in the affections of his little girls after they learned the multiplication table."

"Children, if you continue, there will be nobody left for me to insult," remonstrated Elizabeth.

"The only person Monica has insulted is Gretchen."

"I beg her pardon on my knees. But the most appalling thought is that — leaving great Faust quite out of the question — suppose a Baretinsky should marry a Gretchen, he would re-establish what he called her moral character, and she would be what we call received. Sufficient imperial favor and wealth, which he has, a trip round the world, a new field of action — and that sweet thing society would smile upon them. It is monstrous."

"When one tries to vaguely picture the life of such a man —" Eleanor began.

"And he by no means the worst, probably —"

"The agony, shame, and despair —"

"The innumerable Gretchens!" sighed Monica. "They cast out; he welcomed everywhere."

"It makes one ill, — the huge mass of injustice."

A silence, and from the sofa only a long sigh.

"But since we perceive, and good men perceive, it makes one strong to hope," Monica said after a while.

Elizabeth suddenly drawled:

"I wonder what Florence Arco thinks about Gretchen."

"Come here a moment, Elizabeth, and look at this with us," begged Monica, taking a large photograph from a portfolio.

"What a hideous thing!" Elizabeth exclaimed, laughing.

"Look at it well, and you'll not find it hideous."

Two half-human creatures, not joyous like the satyrs, fauns, and centaurs of fable, but already vaguely oppressed with the burden of humanity; the "missing link;" the primeval pair, as shaped by the imagination and

brush of the artist: Gabriel Max: *Pithecanthropus alalos*. With acknowledgment to Georg Malkowsky, the suggested Adam and Eve of science. Two beings in the shifting borderland between the assumed unconsciousness of the animal kingdom and the first glimmerings of the sentient soul. In shape only heavily built, abnormal apes,—let the wise decide it if they can, whether such anatomy be probable,—but in the physiognomy a wonderful depth of expression that holds and haunts.

In the male, the animal predominates. He has immense jaws and a bestial mouth, and from under drooping heavy lids his dull eyes apathetically view the outer world. Standing nearly erect, he clings still and steadies himself with arms and head against a low branch, as if taking his first faltering step into an unknown stage of being.

But the primeval woman, already detached from her natural surroundings, cowers upon the earth and nurses her offspring. With mournful eyes wide open, brooding, veiled with tears, she gazes into the distance. A whole world of dawning emotion is in that look. Through the helpless form at her breast, the life of her life, she has become

vaguely prescient of the anguish of existence for the race which has emancipated itself from unreflecting nature, and the tears roll slowly down her cheeks as if from a dark presentment of all the woe she, the first mother, has entailed upon humanity.

The three looked long and silently at the singular picture, each under the spell of those haunting eyes, each in her own way pondering upon the mystery of life, of love, of sorrow, of sin, of destiny.

"It is powerful," said Eleanor, "and touching."

"And when one considers the courage," Monica began impetuously, — "the divine courage the race has shown in the long struggle —"

"And shows to-day —"

"One is proud to belong to it."

"Don't weep, little granny," Elizabeth began. "It is a bit better than you knew. We are toddling along — slowly."

"And we shall arrive!" exclaimed Monica.

"Who knows?" said Eleanor.

"I think it fair to tell you," Monica remarked with a sudden little laugh as she put away the picture, "that when my mother comes, things will be a trifle different here.

Oh, you need not look alarmed, Elizabeth. You may still loll on the sofa all you like. But the 'Pithecanthropos,' she will probably, with the utmost amiability of manner, throw into the fire. She delighteth not in Darwin. And then you see, at present, we have things here all our own way. When she comes, you will find she will oppose and often rout us completely."

"So much the better. That will be more interesting," rejoined Eleanor.

"Mamma is rather conservative," Monica went on, with a mingling of great joy and amusement in her face and voice. "But she is generous. She will listen. She does not draw down her mouth and hurry off, as if she found contamination, when people do not think as she thinks. And she is clever. She will have an answer even for you, Eleanor. And she is young—incredibly young—*younger than any of us.*"

"I am old, if you please," said Elizabeth. "A year older than you, Monica; two years older than Eleanor."

"I never thought much about it; but had I been asked, I should have said you were younger."

"Seven and twenty summers — rather mean

ones! But nobody suspects it, because of my prattle and my " — singing — " " sun-ny, sun-ny hair! " "

" You are going to be mothered all the same, young woman. You, too, Eleanor. But mamma writes in her letter this morning — of her own self — Elizabeth and Rob must certainly stay with us. We shall take an apartment, or perhaps a modest villa. She says she wants to remain here awhile, where people have been so good to her child."

Meeting the eyes of her friends, she asserted as if some one had contradicted her:

" People have been good to me, — wonderfully good."

" When that blessed woman comes," Elizabeth declared with a rare softness of expression, " you two may treat me with some respect, if you please. I don't wish to hear any compromising allusions to my character. Let Mrs. Randolph find it out for herself. She is quite able without your assistance. I intend to be her favorite, Eleanor, so you need not steal in with those demure and gentle wiles. I intend to be mothered."

Eleanor smiled.

" I shall like it, too," she said softly.

" It will be different," Monica repeated, her

face radiant with gladness, reminiscence, and exceedingly amused anticipation. "She is a personality, you understand. But, ah, it is beautiful to be mothered!"

She and Elizabeth, leaving the house early that evening, met Arenberg passing the door.

He was sad at heart and physically tired out, had come from discomfort and sharp discussion at home, dreary differences of opinion as to expenses, social obligations, and, worst of all, the children,—a scene more exhausting to his vitality than even excessive professional work; was going to see an old friend whom he knew he could not save, and acute neuralgia was rioting in his legs. Upon the pessimistic melancholy of his plane of thought, the two women appeared like a vision of light. He stopped to bid them good-evening, turned, and strolled along with them.

"You are looking well, Miss Randolph," he said, regarding her with attention. His thought was stronger than his words.

"I am very happy," returned Monica. "My mother sailed for Bremen this morning. We shall always be together now."

"I am glad. It has been long and hard for you without her."

"Yes,"

"She is like a rubber ball to-day," Elizabeth told him. "I have great difficulty in repressing her bounce."

"She is in the best of hands," he returned, smiling.

"We are on our way to the Ehrensteins'," Monica communicated farther, "for the walk up the hill, and to tell them the good news. They are good enough to be much interested in her arrival."

"They are a charming old couple," Arenberg said cordially.

"If Miss Randolph had only taken the general young enough, she would have succeeded in convincing him of the inhumanity of war. She still tries, although it is quite superfluous, as he is long ago retired."

"He is convinced of its inhumanity," Monica rejoined, amused; "but he persists in believing it inevitable. I do my best, of course, to convert him."

"He is a very enlightened man. His son in Dresden married an American girl. I presume she has an illuminating effect upon the family," Arenberg suggested.

"Oh, did I deserve that?" cried Monica, laughing.

He had strolled perhaps a block with them.

He now stopped and took off his hat. The low sun traced golden threads in his brown hair and beard, and accentuated the transparency of his pallor.

"You deserve something very good, I suspect, Miss Randolph," he said kindly, and retraced his steps, not precisely wishing either of his esteemed old patients the Ehrensteins had a mild influenza or an incipient indigestion for him on that pleasant evening, yet indistinctly conscious, as he resumed his treadmill, that the freedom to walk on indefinitely in that bright companionship would be sweet.

"That is the only person I cannot jeer at," Elizabeth declared roundly. "Did ever a man take himself so simply?"

"I found myself suddenly telling him everything as if he would care," Monica remembered with surprise. "And he answered as if he cared. He is very uncommon. The first time I saw him I thought that."

"I adore him! Everybody does, except a few envious colleagues and his wife. I suppose there is no doubt he has no sympathy and affection from that quarter."

"That would be a sad pity—and extraordinary—incredible, I should say."

"One of the first tales I heard when I came here was a wild romance of years ago about the Arenbergs. Incompatibility — indiscretion, more or less, on her part. On his part absorption in his profession. Flirtations manifold. Somebody jumped from a high window and broke his leg. Scenes. Talk of divorce. Arenberg for his children's sake relented. Stifled misery."

"Why, Elizabeth, you know you do not believe that."

"Oh, I don't believe the whole framework. It is unwieldy, and you know very well I don't disseminate such tales. But I have watched that little party, my dear; her manner to him; her manner to Count Arco and others. She does not like Arenberg, I assure you."

"Manner! What then? People watch you and me; and if we do not actually go to sleep in public, they say we are sad flirts. I feel very much inclined to let women enjoy in peace the eyes and smiles they happen to have about them."

"I like neither her nor her sister."

"Evidently."

Elizabeth colored and said hastily:

"Not because Florence Arco is always driving them out in her pony basket —"

"I hope not. I imagine Florence Arco merely does what she is told to do."

This point Elizabeth waived and resumed:

"For altogether different reasons. I never fancied them from the first, I admit. But I know certain attitudes they have taken at certain times, and — I think they'd better sweep their own pavements —"

"Healthful exercise for us all."

"I confess I am sorry for Dr. von Arenberg. I am always sorry for the men and women who manage to get chained for life to the wrong ones — particularly for the handsome men!"

Monica was silent.

"I don't know why it need be, either, do you? A man is rash and makes a bad speculation in stocks, say. He shrugs his shoulders and says, What a fool I was! But he does not, as in matrimony, suffer from his want of judgment to the end of his days, and perhaps entail suffering upon his children's children to the third and fourth generation after him, all because he made a mistake twenty years ago. It is horrible. I wonder more people are not divorced."

Monica with a remote look, hesitating, said:

"I suppose it may be a matter of honor —"

or duty — not to leave a woman — or a man — even if one knows what we call happiness lies elsewhere.”

“It is hard.”

“Yes.”

“Stupid world! What’s to be done with it?”

“I suppose there may be cases,” said Monica again, as if her thoughts were far away, “where it is right to extricate one’s self, and other cases when one — must go down with one’s ship.”

“I never could see the slightest sense in going down with one’s ship. It is heroic, of course, but so utterly useless.”

Monica smiled and shook her head.

“Ah, no! Not useless; never once useless since the world was made.”

After a while Elizabeth returned, in her voice a certain defiance:

“I like lovers who have resolution enough to take their fate in their own hands and elope.”

“I like them too.”

“Even if they know anathema will follow them,” Elizabeth added hotly.

“I understand that too.”

“Oh, do you?” Her voice was mocking, eager.

"I do, Elizabeth. If a man and woman choose to sacrifice the others, I understand. If they choose to sacrifice themselves, I understand. But there are almost always the others. And if love has to walk over bodies —"

"Mean bodies!" Elizabeth exclaimed fiercely. "What does it matter about them?"

Monica slipped her arm in her friend's.

"Dear, is there anything in this world I can do for you? Is there anything — more — you wish to say to me?"

"No, no. I cannot!" Then more gently, "If ever there is, I will tell you. Never mind me. I still say it seems to me imbecile for Dr. Arenberg and his wife to cling to the outward form of marriage and jog along together miserably, when both would be better off apart."

"No one knows that."

"The whole town knows it."

"The whole town!" cried Monica, with unutterable contempt. "Is it well for you to say that — *to me*?"

"Well, *I* know it," Elizabeth declared obstinately.

"No stranger's eye can judge. It is impertinent and worse to assume such familiarity with interiors."

"I was born impertinent."

"I have seen her only at a distance at large receptions and the opera. I thought her rather nice, — bright and pretty."

"For his sake I wish she were an angel in the house. But she looketh it not. Nay, neither she nor her sister."

"From your point of view."

"Yes. It happens to be the only one I have at my disposal. If you are haughty to me, Monica, I'll tell your mother. My temper is rather vicious in these days. That is the fault of my hair."

"Pretty hair!"

"I'll tell you something nice for that. Once, long ago before you came, I happened to be talking with Dr. Arenberg at some place where he passed in his usual fashion like a gleam, — or as if he had Fortunatus's cap, — at all events, as if he knew the plan and ins and outs of every house in town; I remember I was asking him if he had what Punch calls a good bedside manner. He replied that he really didn't know; he believed he didn't drum on the footboard. At this moment old Baron Uhlefeldt bore down upon us. 'Arenberg,' he said, after the preliminary salaams, 'I have always wanted to ask you something.'

Dr. Arenberg did not say, Ask. He merely waited with that polite, patient, look of his, — it is too mild for irony, but it is delicious, whatever it is. ‘What induces you to reject your title?’ ‘Reject is too impressive, Baron. One does not reject an old glove. One simply wears it no longer.’ ‘The honorable title of your forefathers,’ began Uhlefeldt, with respect. ‘Oh, I think we have had enough of that comedy,’ Dr. Arenberg returned carelessly, and asked after Rob. But the Baron was not to be shunted off. Very jovially he continued: ‘And you must not mind an old fellow’s curiosity, but why any man of birth should choose to be a sawbones instead of a soldier, is quite beyond my comprehension.’ ‘I presume so,’ said Dr. Arenberg, with ineffable harmlessness, and his glance just grazed the portly old major’s breast, which you must admit, Monica —” Elizabeth laughed with a touch of spiteful satisfaction — “looks like a stately pleasure-dome. ‘I presume not. But it happened that I had the good fortune early in life to recognize my limitations. I foresaw that my dimensions would never attain contours desirable for a major, might hardly indeed exceed the proper figure for a lieutenant. That would have been humiliating.’ And

there he stood, so cool, refined, and elegant, and so handsome, though that's not the word. 'Oh, you have a good height, Arenberg. You would have looked very well.' "

"He has a spiritual face," suggested Monica.

"Yes. He wears a halo, I suspect. And the old baron, looking like a prize ox and wheezing like a great bassoon, began to assure him condescendingly: 'It is a great mistake on your part, upon my word.' But he, having given me a fine smile and quick grasp of the hand, was already making his way toward some unsuspected door."

Monica had many messages to deliver from her mother to the Countess Ehrenstein, whom with characteristic decision Mrs. Randolph had selected as most sympathetic in Monica's entire circle of acquaintances. In fact, the two ladies had been corresponding for some months. As the countess was not only one of Monica's kindest but unquestionably her most distinguished friend, a woman of intellect, influence, and grace that defied the years, the rapid progress of this intimacy was one of the things that so often of late called the little amused speculative expression into Monica's face.

It was one of those delightful evenings the

charm of which lingers like the memory of a beautiful and quiet landscape. Monica never forgot it. The exquisite tone between the fine old man and his fine old wife; a subtle mingling of perfect devotion and the delicate jest that slightly masks it; the old general's last poem — on the eve of many a battle he had sent verses to his wife; some interesting pictures examined and chatted over; Elizabeth's voice pouring forth gloriously — always at its best in what seemed most remote from her nature — music expressing religious fervor and profound emotion — *Pietà Signore* and Massenet's *Élégie*; some pretty young girls, little countesses, coming in with soft, deferential manners, making their *révérence* and kissing the countess' hand — but evidently very fond of her and quite at home in the house; some young officers, men with excellent faces and bright uniforms, gleaming briefly and picturesquely upon the scene — all was free, sympathetic, gracious, harmonious, and the old count amiably walked home with them.

Frau Erhardt met them with the announcement that there was something nice on the dining-room table.

"But we have already had something nice at the Ehrensteins'."

"It is only very light — only a velvet-cream," pleaded the Frau Professor.

"Which I by no means scorn," said Elizabeth.

"Nor do I," returned Monica. "Only it is queer and inconsistent business, this eating. When one's hungry, it is perfect. When one is unhappy it is a bore. But to-day I'd like to take my sunlight straight."

A servant handed her a telegram.

She opened it smiling, and without a word fell to the floor.

Her mother was dead.

XIII

ARENBERG came in with Frau Erhardt, stood still by the door, bowed silently to Elizabeth across the room, and quietly watched Monica, who, taking no notice of them, was irrationally occupied in walking rather fast through three or four rooms, turning brusquely when a wall or window or piece of furniture impeded her course.

"We can do nothing with her," the Frau Professor had told him. "She has hardly touched a morsel. I think she has not slept. I hear her at night going on just the same. She races about tearless, speechless, and pushes us all aside. We beg her to have mercy upon herself; she listens to no one. Sometimes she sits down for a few moments, but never when we ask her. I am so sorry to trouble you so late when she's not actually ill."

Arenberg smiled — kindly.

"But we are all afraid she is wearing herself out — and we cannot bear to see her like this

— we are so fond of her, you know, and we are quite helpless.”

Tall, with a white and wooden countenance, and clad in the black raiment her friends had deemed best to hang upon her, hurrying on with her burden of repressed emotion, alone as in the hour of death, this was not the woman whose face, fair in the soft western light, and illumined by the inner radiance of gladness, had been much in his thoughts since he saw it last, not the woman whose frank friendliness had done him good in a sombre moment.

Children, he reflected, sometimes seem unconscious of the loss of the dearest mother, sometimes—rarely—are utterly desperate for a while. But he had never seen a grown person take the death of a mother so wildly. Motionless, with cool speculation and professional interest in the “case,” he watched her as she passed, haggard, unreasonable, unreconciled, and remote. There was more here than what we call natural sorrow, far more, he thought. It was some passionate grief, long repressed and overcome, breaking forth anew, let loose by the sudden death.

He remembered irrelevantly all the heartless brainless chatter he had heard about Monica,

with which indeed he had had no patience. Nevertheless, a mildly sceptical curiosity played across the surface of the deep personal sympathy he was conscious of feeling for her, as he came forward, without a word gently slipped his arm through hers, and walked with her own irregular, hasty step. Monica, without stopping or glancing at him, involuntarily tried to shake him off and free herself, but with soft inflexibility he remained at her side, moving with her movement, curbing her seemingly not at all with that light pressure on her arm. Yet Elizabeth observed, wondering, that the restless pace was gradually relaxing, and it was not long before it became deliberate. Presently Monica, without looking at this near human presence which had dared to invade her loneliness, spoke in a strained voice, and as if continuing a tale:

"And so, you see, it was all in vain — all — all in vain."

"I see," said Arenberg, as he walked her into her bedroom and laid her on her bed.

"Undress her quickly," he told Elizabeth and the others.

Returning in a few moments he found her sitting bolt upright, about to start again upon her voyages.

"Drink this," he said.

It was warm and brown, in a large cup.

She pushed it away but he held it to her lips.

"Drink it." She obeyed.

"I tell you it was all in vain," she cried in a tortured voice, searching his face in dry-eyed agony.

"Poor child!" said Arenberg.

"Poor child," echoed Monica strangely.
"Poor child."

"Drink this."

It was a clear liquid in a small glass.

He laid her back on the pillows. Her strained gaze never left his face. Presently her features relaxed. Some other part of her brain began to work. "Angels and arch-angels," she murmured, her eyes looking straight into his with a gleam as of wondering recognition.

"What does she say?" whispered the Frau Professor.

"English," answered Arenberg laconically.

It was not long before Monica was sleeping heavily.

"You did it so quickly," Elizabeth began gratefully, shivering slightly and with tears in her eyes.

"It was so simple, yet here we have been troubling her incessantly. 'Dear Monica, do lie down.' 'Please, just taste this.' Please thus and please that, Monica. As for her bed, I began to think she scorned the straw-death and wanted to die fighting, and be expressed post haste to Walhalla —"

"Miss Randolph is not due in Walhalla just yet. She is very strong — but hard hit."

"Yes," Elizabeth replied, helplessly.

"I will look in to-morrow," he said to the Frau Professor. "Miss McCarroll, you must go home and go to bed."

"I'd rather not leave Monica."

"She has been here all the time, resting hardly more than Miss Randolph, only dozing a little on that sofa."

"I thought as much. But nothing short of the last trump can wake Miss Randolph for some hours now. Let me walk over with you."

Elizabeth was so consoled by his gentleness that she prepared a reviving speech for Monica's convalescence:

"If that angel ever asks me to elope, I shall certainly go."

Arenberg reaching home about one had still some letters to write, and on his desk lay

his little boys' dog-eared, blotted copy-books, Egon's Greek, Bodo's Latin, one as bad as the other, as if their thoughts had gone a-fishing while their hands insulted the grammar.

"Poor little scatterbrains! How they hate it!" and he patiently made his crosses and dots and marginal notes, that the boys themselves might not fail to find their mistakes. It was not enlivening occupation for a weary man, and he could not flatter himself that they profited much by it, but he had the idea it kept him more in touch with his children than he otherwise would be.

Twice of late he had taken them into the woods. As he laid the books aside he remembered with a smile how much better than at Latin were the little fellows at counting the cuckoo's note and finding salamanders. As he told them about trees and plants, they grew almost free with him. Sometimes it almost seemed as if they, Bodo especially, were a little fond of him. "If it might be," he thought longingly—"if it might be—a little while."

The old reproach pulled at his heart, that he neglected them, that he ought to find more hours for them. Alas, how could he? Well, he ought, even if he could not. There was

no doubt about that. A still older reproach, vast, nameless, vague, something at least which he did not always frame in words, and which most men would have found ludicrously morbid and absurd, began to cloud his spirit. He got up, breathed deep, and pressed his hand on his heart. "This is pure folly, since I cannot undo the past." The light fell strongly on the chiselled face of the great ascetic. Arenberg looked at the figure, turned it slowly in his hands, and regarded it with uplifted brows and his questioning smile.

"Brother Benedict, you of the other Faculty, sometimes I think your wilderness would be a relief, and as for penance, there are many kinds abundantly provided for us without resorting to the cave, the scourge, and hair-cloth; for instance, neuralgic gout in the legs — which I really hope you had not, and even an unholy man like me may quietly contemplate that which yawns before him. A good many of my simplest patients do as much every day. Nevertheless, Brother Benedict, you were a brave fellow, and I get a queer kind of silent comradeship from you. You in your quality of spirit probably would answer that whole pile of letters before going to bed. I, a sinner, shall weakly procrasti-

nate as usual, take a dose of antifibrin, and lay my bones to rest."

"All in vain," she had said. What had the poor girl done and suffered that was all in vain? His thoughts as he fell asleep were busy with her, as well as with many things which he each sad day, in his private life and in his professional experiences, found all in vain. In the narrow field of his personal observation enough indeed seemed of ghastly inutility—anguish immeasurable, concentrated in many an innocent life for the doubtful good of brief mortal existence.

But his innermost conviction of the reason governing all things, his faith in the Mind of the universe, the noble, unswerving faith of many scientists whom the sects childishly call infidels, had strengthened with every year since the philosophical spring flood of his student period, and had sustained him in his unequal fight with disease and death. Science had led him indeed away from theological dogma and through that season of dogmatic materialism—which boys have strongly, as when younger the measles—yet science itself had led him farther on and on into lighter, loftier, vaster fields.

With a deep joy in Goethe and a gentle

leaning toward Spinoza — these influences filtered through his own modifying personality — he possessed, in spite of his modern views, his wise insight into others' physical needs, an habitual disregard for his own bodily discomfort as preposterously self-denying, as gallantly unwise, and as sure of the inevitable punishment that follows every transgression of nature's law, as the starvation and flagellation of the great and good St. Benedict.

Incredibly patient in detail, willing and diligent as a humble artisan, this modern questioner's spiritual nature had a wide and lofty range. In an earlier age he would have seen sacred visions and dreamed mystic dreams, for everywhere he involuntarily sought divinity, in the smallest leaf as he scrutinized its tracery while smiling at the chatter of his boys in the wood — every appalling combination of disease before which he stood sad and helpless, forced to admit that one vaunted knowledge and experience as yet had unveiled but little of the vast and elusive mystery of nature.

Beneath all these inconsistencies, if such they be — for who but a benighted collector of human specimens ever found a pure type, and of what are we all made but conflicting movements? — was a warm temperament, con-

scious need of human affection, pre-eminently the love of woman, an unsatisfied craving so great that he half regarded it as a weakness, submerged it in work, guarded it perfectly with cool tranquillity of manner—a wise precaution, indeed, in a profession before which perhaps more than in any other humanity drops its mask. The cell, the scourge, are perhaps easier for a man to bear than the innocent embrace of some simple woman, who, prevaricating in shame, at last shows to her doctor the welds on her poor back, beaten by the drunken brute her husband. And if hearing gentle words of pained solicitude, the first perhaps that ever met her ear, she, broken, bruised, and ill, awaiting soon her child, puts up sudden soft arms like a child and sobs in misery upon the nearest human breast—who dare condemn? As in garrets, so in boudoirs, for though bruises be of many colors, the human heart is one. Yet since the best of us are but mere flesh and blood, perhaps if the truth were known it is not so remarkable that now and then human nature slips, as is duly chronicled with copious illustrations in our newspapers, but that priests—of all persuasions—and doctors, and lawyers, who also in the best sense may be doctors and priests

—are for the most part content, in spite of their confessionals and all connected therewith, to be simply honest men with not the remotest prospect of canonization.

“All in vain,” repeated Arenberg, awaiting the action of the antifibrin upon his neuralgic gout, which even more effectually than Macduff-reminiscences murders sleep. “All in vain.” He determined to help her to regain the beautiful poise she had lost. He believed that he understood her, was akin to her, whatever the story of her life. After a few hours’ sleep, he was under the impression he had but closed his eyes when the telephone bell jerked him up, at half-past five.

What passed in Monica, no one knew. Suddenly inaccessible to affection, unresponsive to the wistful care of friends, she was ungrateful, stolid, and dead to her surroundings. Eleanor might offer a mute caress, the touch of cheek or lips or tearful eyes upon her friend’s listless hand. She, the tender-hearted, paid no heed. Eleanor was doing all her work for the New York *Panyphone*, the Chicago *Unicum*, and *The Nosegay*. She heard this, like all else they said to her, with utter indifference. Beef-tea and the other obligatory potions, she swallowed now mechanically. But

not one good word had she for those who loved her and ministered to her continually — only a silent stare.

Mr. Loring came in every day and looked at her mournfully; poor Lal wrote in great remorse for his bad moods; whole-hearted, manly renewal of the old theme came promptly from Mr. Forsythe in Rome; the Ehrensteins hastened to her; flowers and kind messages poured in *en masse*, and people were good and pitiful. For all this she manifested the thankfulness of a log. Remote, inert, she lay for the most part quite still, but now and then, like a wild animal, plunged up and down her cage in hopelessness.

Such was her exterior. And within? Philosophers tell us there is no such thing as time or space — Monica was merely realizing this truth. In her, all that had been was. While she mourned despairingly for her mother, all the sorrow that had gone before awoke and lived: every pang for Lilian, the sombre, fateful year preceding her death — the long strain, the pity, and the dread. And Keith — Monica's entire relationship to him, every episode, every link in the chain, every tone and look, each dear and despairing word, sea and starlight and storm, whatever had been near

them, all gathered itself together for the supreme death struggle. And the mother that was coming to her child—coming to protect, to love, to bless; coming in security, in courage and joy, with plans for many a year,—Ah, God! How she stood erect in the sunlight and smiled as the steamer moved off!

All was so far away. Ages ago it happened. Monica was adrift forever, on a shoreless sea. There was nothing more to reach, nothing more to do. No aim. No haven. No hope. Adrift. If only the thoughts would be still. Since all was lost, why should the thoughts rage on? Black, tumultuous, singing thoughts. That was why she could not speak, although she saw Elizabeth bending over her with a tired face, quite a new face.

The thoughts were ceaseless. They were all her childhood, all her past. Winds and the waving of trees. Foolish things and sounds on the shore—shells and fleecy clouds, and her mother's every-day sweet words. But mostly troubled thoughts—dark—unending—throbbing. Ah, how they beat and throbbed! How they rose and fell, stormed and surged in a wild waste of blackness! But sometimes, when suddenly late at night a clear-cut face bent over her an instant, a light hand touched

her wrist, her forehead, a calm voice spoke a few low words that all obeyed, it seemed as if Hans Nilssen — or Nils Hanssen — had opened the port-hole.

The days wore on, and she, neither well nor ill, neither alive nor dead, merely something that cumbered the ground, was the despair of her friends.

"The same apathy?" Dr. Arenberg asked every day.

"Quite the same," was the stereotyped answer.

They took her out to drive. It was in the wonderful month of May. Sometimes the sorrowing heart confronted anew by the elemental joy of nature, although deeply touched by a thousand reminiscences, may yet feel a certain sad and remote reconciliation with gladness. To Monica the perfect freshness of leaf and blossom might have been gray on gray.

In due time came a letter from Keith, a good letter, anxious, kind, pitiful. He said he had done all that was possible to save her mother; he had seen in the first moment it was fatal; pneumonia — a three days' illness: he had been with her constantly, like a son. Then he admitted it was long ago in response

The Garden of Eden

to her prayer that he had gradually discontinued the correspondence, and that he had promised her never to resume it. Yet he too knew well this was best for Monica. ;

Even this letter she read without emotion, and laid aside wearily. It was the first letter from Keith she had not welcomed as a message from on high, and touched and fondled like some dear living thing. What could words matter now? All was over.

Judge Trevor wrote her also with his own dear old trembling hand. His letter too she read with quiet and dreary mien. Yet one day suddenly, she awakened sufficiently to say, with one clear glance, quite naturally, to Elizabeth, who had been patient as a dog:

“Why do you look so tired, dear?”

At this, Elizabeth dropped on the floor, laid her head against Monica, and sobbed violently. Monica paid no more heed, being used to people weeping over her, but to Elizabeth this was a crucial moment.

“We must bring her back to earth,” Arenberg said; but it was many weeks before Monica’s true self reappeared. The automaton that had taken her place lingered obstinately.

One June evening she lay listless in her great chair when Arenberg came in. He

drew a chair near her, sat down, looking pale, with a luminous but not sickly pallor, and scrutinized her carefully.

"Do you know, you are very strong?" he began.

"Yes," she replied, indifferently.

This word "strong" had pursued her like a wasp, and in earlier days she hated it. When she as a child had strained every nerve like a race-horse to win some prize, and had won it against older and more phlegmatic competitors, they always said, "Monica is strong." When she stood sturdily day and night by some sufferer whose moans and whims exhausted everybody else, they always chanted, "Monica is strong." In later years she had indeed become reconciled to her strength, and recognized its use and wholesomeness.

But all this she was too dull and too apathetic to remember to-night, so she simply said yes, and looked blankly in the fine, solicitous face regarding her.

"How long do you intend to be so useless?" he continued quietly.

She said nothing, yet something stirred in her heart.

"Do you know, your friends need you?"

"No one needs me any more," she mur-

mured languidly, and he was glad, for since she had begun, if faintly, to defend herself, health had set in.

"Elizabeth needs you."

"Ah, Elizabeth," she repeated softly.

"We all need you."

She closed her eyes.

"Good-night. You have no right to waste your strength. I think you can bear everything."

He spoke with a sort of stern tenderness and was gone. Toward nine o'clock one evening four or five days later, calm and cool, with his air of having more time at his disposal than there was, he came again. She had pondered idly without acting upon his words. He stood looking at her thoughtfully.

"I am tired," Monica, curiously enough, thought fit to say in self-defence.

"I hoped I should find you at work," he returned simply, "or at least resting from work."

"Ah — work," she said listlessly.

"It is a good thing," he returned with his sweet and tranquil voice. "It is often the best thing we have. Is it not time to relieve little Eleanor? She is less strong than you," he said after a while, mild and direct.

She sat up with a troubled look.

"You are very strong."

"Strong! Strong!" she repeated bitterly. "Why do you always say strong? I am weak. I am only a leaf in the blast. If you knew!"

He did not reply, but sat, his arm leaning on a table, his thoughtful, compassionate face bent toward her. The room was dim, still, and fragrant with roses.

She looked in that face, strong, tender, beautiful in the twilight, and contemplating her silently. As if constrained by some occult influence, she began to speak low and simply the thoughts of her inmost heart.

Her whole life story, herself, she laid before him. Her strong emotions, her highest thoughts, her secret motives, her faults and weaknesses, what she had done, what she had suffered, found expression in rapid unstudied words, reasonable, fiery, helpless, brave, and sad. At times she started up and paced the room; at times she stood still, then returned to her place near him.

Swayed and thrilled by the woman's voice, by her form and movements, by the charm of her presence, he never moved. Picture after picture passed before him. That drama in a

land beyond seas became his own, like the most homely scenes of his boyhood. Her people were his people, he saw, he heard, he felt with them all. Her griefs, her struggles, were his. And he knew her — ah, how he comprehended her! — better far than she knew herself, better than any one had ever known her. There was a trace of the savage in this dear woman, something elemental, unsubdued, and he loved it. He — so weary and so tame. It quickened and revived him, it bathed his soul young and fresh. He could have gathered her to his heart and held her close, as something long his own, always his own. How strange to live six-and-thirty years and never to find his own until this night!

Monica's confession swept on without barriers, without reserve. All that she had guarded, repressed, buried deep, was revealed — her heart's tenderness, her spirit's revolt, its feebleness on its lonely path, its search for spiritual help, its longing for light, its knocking as with puny but importunate hand at the mighty and mysterious closed portals of nature. Often her voice was the voice of his own heart, more disciplined, slightly melancholy and sceptical. Often he marvelled at her childlike freshness of emo-

tion, her immense warm faith in humanity, at a certain naïve and reverential attitude in all her affections — these traits strong, invincible, in spite of her struggles, her sorrows, and the gray desolation of the hour. Monica spoke lower, slower, finally ceased. It seemed to him had she not been sacred to him, it would have been profanation to listen. It was that rare and solemn thing, the unveiling of a soul.

The room was shadowy, fragrant, and still. His head was bowed upon his hand. Monica leaned back motionless. Some minutes passed in silence. Presently Arenberg rose abruptly, as was his wont.

“I will come in to-morrow,” he said gently, holding her hand an instant, but an influence subtle as the twilight, delicately penetrating as the fragrance of the roses, encompassed them, and from that hour she was no longer alone.

The next morning she asked Eleanor for her report of her stewardship, and worked a little with her, listlessly. As they sat together Egon and Bodo von Arenberg marched in, Egon with a letter in his hand, Bodo with one perfect rose. “From papa,” the little boys said, one after the other, stiffly, and looked shyly at her under their thick, dark lashes.

Arenberg merely begged her to excuse him that evening as he was called out of town. His thoughts were much with her, he said. That was all. But the note dispensed with the customary forms, had no beginning and no signature. She smiled at the children, and suddenly for an instant began to talk brightly to them, like her old self.

It was some days before he came again. His first glance told him she had not progressed very far. He found her still and alone, her hands clasped behind her head, her eyes staring at nothing. Yet he knew with a rush of keen joy as she looked up that he was not unwelcome. He longed intensely to help her re-find her nobler self; so far as he was able to share these days of heaviness with her; vague and nameless desires floated before him, sentiments of tenderness, devotion, pity; and her immense charm, weary and helpless as she seemed at the moment, moved him mightily.

He sat down and began simply:

"Is that as far as you've got?"

"It would seem so."

"It is not very far, is it?" he said with a slight smile. "A baby could accomplish as much."

"Doubtless. You have been out of town?"

"Frequently, since I saw you." After a while he said suddenly: "Shall I tell you where? Shall I tell you some things I have seen in these few days? May I speak freely as if you were my — brother? Not as we stupid doctors usually speak?"

"Do," she replied with more interest.

"It was on a Sunday evening that I was here, was it not? Yes — to-day is Thursday. On Monday evening late, I was called not far from here, an hour by rail, in consultation to a hopeless case — a woman wholly unreconciled to death, who must leave young children. It was not a cheerful experience. On Tuesday evening at four I went, in response to a telegram that had arrived Monday evening, to a patient also in a neighboring town. I found her dead. The All-merciful had released her — I confess, according to my impertinent notion, a good many years too late; for the poor thing though young was a chronic sufferer, and rendered unspeakably wretched by a brute of a husband, one of the coarsest and most selfish of men. She has known almost nothing of life, except its pain.

"That same afternoon a despatch called me

to Wildbad. There I found a beautiful young woman, vigorous until now, fatally ill. A week ago she became a mother — her first child. Some bad complications have set in. She is doomed to speedy death. She has everything to live for, the world would say — affection, wealth, social position. . . . I came home toward one o'clock. Yesterday I was again summoned out of town to a patient in a little place near here — a lovely young girl, a pet of her family and society, who about two years ago became engaged to be married to the man of her choice, and then — suddenly — incurably ill, — dying now of consumption, which is a curse that lurks in the blood and now and then seizes its victim. But I will not continue my gloomy chronicle," he added, wondering whether he was cruel to tell her these things. He would have tried this method with no other person, but he felt from the first that if he read clear in her soul, a straight appeal to her valor would rouse and revive her more than all lamentations and soft manipulations on earth. "These are only a few of your sisters, not far from you at this moment," he concluded.

She watched him closely as he spoke.

"Are you not tired?"

He might with truth have answered he was never anything else.

"I have little time to think about that," he returned indifferently, and rose.

"Are you going — so soon?"

"I am rather busy."

Many parallel impressions occupied her: the singularly calm beauty of his face; the anguish of all these innocent women; his goodness to her and his dutifulness; a consciousness of ingratitude, unworthiness, and torpor from which she ought long ago to have emerged were her whole being not so leaden; the sense of tears in the heart and throat while the eyes were clear.

Suddenly she asked low:

"Is it worth while?"

"Ah, you know it is!" he exclaimed, as if in reproach — walked away a few steps, returned, and said, his face splendidly illumined and inspired:

"Something tells me daily, and with a thousand tongues, that all this anguish is tending toward some unimagined good, some supreme and eternal end, which perhaps even we earth-worms might dimly discern if —"

Monica drew a deep breath. This was the faith to which she had clung, until she lost her

joy and hope. This recalled old sufferings, old victories, renunciation, resignation, peace, gladness, and triumph.

"If?" she said. "If? —"

"If we did not persist in clinging to the illusion that the little self in us, the *ich*, the *ego*, is so overweeningly and endlessly important. That is the lecture I often have to give myself. Forgive me that I dare to say as much to you. I have never spoken so freely to any other person."

This he said very gently, naturally, as he did all things, without a trace of didactic intent, and with his good clear eyes looking, it seemed to her, through all her clouds and straight into the core of her heart. She, troubled, questioning, appealing, returned his long gaze. Suddenly he stooped and kissed her hands lingeringly.

"Why do you look so tired, dear?" she asked Elizabeth on the following morning, but this time regarded her attentively.

"Oh, Monica, have you come back? You were so far away! I thought you were never coming back. And I needed you so!"

Monica could hardly realize that any one on earth really needed a creature so dull and weighted down by such a heartache. But the

memory of her sisters in various directions pursued her, and would not let her sit idle and self-absorbed.

"Tell me about it, dear," she said.

"Well, Monica, in the first place, I want some money."

"How much?" Monica started up to get her cheque-book.

"Never mind that now. That is all right, I know — In the next place, life is rather a nauseating compound. Monica, have you really come back? Are you really all there? Because if you are in the Elysian fields, I do not care to talk. I never wanted to, however, until I could not have you. That is my contrariness."

"I have really come back, Elizabeth — such as I am — a poor thing."

"Well, dear, to break the news gently, I nearly eloped with Leo Uhlefeldt," Elizabeth continued in a hard tone, and, in spite of effort, a mirthless manner. "I wavered north, I wavered south. All the time you acted chloroformed. I was frantic. It seemed to me nobody in this earth cared what became of me. But one day suddenly — it was the fatal day — you came out of your clouds, and looked at me with sweet good eyes and asked me why I

was tired, and then I could n't leave you, you know."

Monica's heart smote her a more vigorous and healthy blow than she had felt in many weeks.

"Of course that would not have held me if I had trusted him perfectly. That is the bitter part of it all. Trust? Well, he is honest — was, I mean. He is engaged to be married to Florence Arco at this present. He wanted even to give up his career, swore he'd never regret it. You know how the idiots go on! But I have seen too much of life not to know better. Why, they draw their breath for the army, would be miserable out of it and away from their petty local society and court life. I don't think he'd be good for anything else either. He has absolutely no other interests — cares not a straw for literature or art or philanthropy, or any other fad. Can one ruin such a man outright? I am so awfully fond of him, Monica, all the same. One does n't know why one likes a man — not for his Greek, I presume. But I know Leo too well to ruin his career and deprive him of his patrimony.

"He has a modest income from his mother. That is what we were going to live on in a villa — and a cheap one — on the Riviera,

according to his rhapsodies. I told him he would be yawning about the house in slippers and dressing-gown before three months were gone, and I could n't stand that sort of thing an instant. Imagine him, of all men, trying to economize! The old baron told me once to my face, blandly, of course, as if the subject were but remotely important, that if Leo should ever marry imprudently he would not inherit a penny of the fortune that would otherwise fall to him. The old baron, by the way, has been very adroit. You have seen enough yourself, Monica. When he wanted to obtain anything of Leo the old man was nice to me, and kept me prettily dangling, while Florence Arco has been slowly emerging from the nursery.

"Well, it has gone on four years now. Leo was determined to win his father over. I have understood his tactics very well. They made me furious at times — and nervous and detestable, which is no news to you. Still, Leo hoped — and I too — I was so fond of him. Lately the old baron has brought on his heavy artillery, promised Leo a new racer, a doubled allowance, and heaven knows what baubles, if he would cease his dallying, be a sensible fellow, and engage himself to Countess Florence.

Leo flies to me. We enact scenes that would draw tears from a glass eye. It is a pity you could not have reported them for *The Panyphone*. He begs, weeps, swears, goes down on his knees, threatens to blow his brains out, all of which inspires no confidence in my rattlepate, and I jeer; then suddenly he is so sure of himself, so persuasive and so manly, I almost yield. Whereupon I say something quite hateful and send him off half beside himself.

"It went on in this fashion until I could bear it no longer—the old baron continually at him, he at me—and I'm fond of Leo, you know, Monica, awfully fond of him—and finally I thought it did not much matter about me, and perhaps I might as well go—to the dogs—to the cheap villa, I mean—though I could n't ruin his whole life by marrying him. That was the day you looked at me as if you loved me, and held me back. I met him that night, and said something altogether insulting. The next day he became engaged to Florence Arco."

Brusquely, softly, at times against her will, she related her experience. Monica listened in silence.

"Nauseous, is it not, Monica? And so superfluous! In the first place, why need I be

fond of him? I have been fond of other men, half a dozen, more or less: more, I fancy. One forgets. In sentimental songs a woman loves once. But nature has made no remarks on this subject, I believe. Nature is not sentimental. And the poets? Never mind what they say. Just watch what they do. If you find the one and he finds you, that is luck. But if you do not, you make your little tentative excursions. Men tell us we are womanly when we love but once. Men! They have told us a lot of things to make life comfortable for themselves.

“Monica, I don’t mean to excuse myself. I have knocked about a good deal, you know. That is what happens when you are an orphan, have red hair and three uncles. Instead of finding the one, I was always finding some other woman’s one. I never went to stay a few days in a country house but somebody left in tears—I, or somebody else, it matters little which. My hair, I suppose! I loved once and forever when I was sixteen; twice and forever at seventeen and a half; thrice and forever shortly after. They all married rich girls. I never met very good men—not very bad, but not good, mediocre. I never met a woman I trusted until I knew you—not bad women,

but conventional, cowardly, mediocre. I think I've not done anything very bad, but heedless, reckless, stupendously rash things without number. Mean? Well, I don't know; rather malicious, when women were n't nice to me. My uncles wished me to study, and write or teach. Now I have no talent for consecutive study, no patience with children, no pedagogic skill. That you must admit. It occurred to me one day that I would take Rob and my voice to Germany, live quietly, and work. I began to think there must be something in life beyond futile love-making. My uncles, relieved to get rid of me, deigned to consent to concerts, but plainly opposed the stage. From one to the other the step is easy. There you have me, Monica, life size."

Still Monica bowed her head and did not speak.

"Are you disgusted? I don't wonder. I am often enough with myself. But, Monica, sometimes I think it would be fair, should they try me, to recommend me to mercy. Because, you see, if you give a girl my musical temperament, my imprudence, my tongue, my good family, my luxurious tastes and no money, and set her rolling about this planet, well, she might do better, but she might do worse than

I have done so far. And what makes me wicked is to see how holy the girls feel whose mothers marry them off well, girls who have no temperaments, or tongues, or red hair, and to whom men don't make love except on a good commercial basis. What does marriage mean between Leo and Florence Arco? He cannot endure her. He said he would rather marry a frog. Oh, Monica, speak! Think aloud. Except Rob, I like nobody but you. Don't give me up. I believe in you. If you should deceive me, I never would believe in any soul again. Oh, Monica, I'm fond of him, you know!—even if you think I have monkey-manners.”

She flung herself down and pressed her face against Monica's knees, who clasped her close and sought but found no words, and felt as if she were born again. She had indeed been born many times during this one sojourn on this planet. New suns of glory were continually dawning upon her. But that this revelation should have come from Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

“Speak to me!” she said imperiously.

Monica kissed the naughty red hair upon her knee.

“You make me ashamed, Elizabeth, you

are so much better than I. There have been sad and hard things in my life. Each time I thought there was nothing harder. But I had great loving friends. All the time you were speaking, I realized that if ever I should go to heaven — not the vast, glorious heaven whither we are all bound, whether we will or no, but the little cooped-up heaven they used to teach us — it would be only by clinging to the skirts of my friends. I was always surrounded by pure and strong influences. You never had them."

"I should say not!" muttered Elizabeth.

"It is wonderful what friends can do! They bear one over abysses and mountain peaks! When I thought I was acting — I, myself — I see now I was propped up on all sides, pushed along. I have been only a weak reflection of my friends. But you have been good all alone. You have had no help, no inspiration."

"Precious little, if the truth were known. Contamination chiefly," murmured the voice on her knee. "No upward road toward the peak. All aboard for the bottomless pit. The way nicely cleared by the men who make hot love to the poor, pretty girls, and marry the ugly rich ones. Don't give me up, Monica!"

"I will never give you up while I live, but don't give me up! You make me unspeakably ashamed. I am inert and selfish, and I ought to be glad—glad all the time! If you could know what you rebuke in me, what you call forth!"

For into Monica's heartache came a great warmth and glow, and her sadness was suffused by a tender exaltation. She divined that she still possessed, could lose in all eternity neither her mother nor Keith, neither Lilian nor any other precious one, and that though the yearning and ache in the heart must be, the joy of it all ought to dominate her life continuously, and shine forth from it. What would she have been without her friends? Her course was straight before her—to prove herself no dastard, ingrate, not all unworthy of the love of so brave souls. But these things are not easy to say in words, so she put her hands on Elizabeth's head and looked down at it as one looks when one smiles through unshed tears and the heart swells and aches, and glories all at once—and in that instant she vowed some vows which, according to her strength, she kept.

"Little Bishop!" mumbled Elizabeth.
"Monica, you need n't take me too seriously.

I am as light as a feather. I'm not like you. I have no depth of emotion."

"That, no one can judge."

"When one considers my undying despair at sixteen, and my ditto at seventeen and a half—"

"Accidents of your condition—not you, yourself."

After a long pause, the very indistinct voice said:

"Monica, do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"That I really wanted to run away to that cheap villa?"

"Yes."

"That I was ready to fling away the world—respectability—even Rob?"

"Yes."

"Monica, do you understand—everything?"

"Yes—everything."

A long silence.

"Then write a nice cheque for me—for I want to go away until the nefarious wedding is over," Elizabeth said, looking up suddenly with a wicked sparkle in her eye. "I've had to get a lot of things for Rob, and I'm too poor at the moment to play magnanimity. I want to run over to England, dumfound my

uncles, sing in some country houses, and make arrangements for concerts next season. You'd better get me off without much delay. I am not to be depended upon an instant—nor is he—and I suppose it is the fair thing now to give the little sheep a chance."

Arenberg perceived at a glance that evening that Monica's lethargy had yielded to an expression both serene and alert, as if she were ready, like a good soldier, to take life's orders, and this touched him, for he understood her.

"You have not been out except to drive? How would you like to take a walk? It is a perfect night."

"I should like that. How good you are to me!"

He looked at her an instant, thinking:

"How I wish I might be good to you! How good I could be to you, how unutterably good!" but said:

"If you will pardon an abject confession, so prosaic that only a hardened doctor could mention such a thing to a lady on a moonlight night in June, a pack of imps inhabit my legs,—on a long lease, I suspect,—and a walk at night sometimes disconcerts them, and encourages me. So I am not wholly disinterested."

"I should think you would have exercised enough," she said practically, as they started.

"Oh, I prance about a good deal, of course, but it is nervous business; and whatever the reason, a good walk with no professional object in view is my best tonic."

This was quite true, and what he called his imps caused him fiendish torture; but as he felt her near, so fair, kind, and desirable, his talk seemed paltry. Why should he take pains to prevaricate? Why, contrary to his habitual reserve, bore her of all people with the insignificant mutiny of his miserable nerves? Why might he not tell her that she was beautiful, dear, and harmonious to him, to soul and sense? That his heart ached strangely for her, and he counted as lost every day he did not see her face? That she rested him, — her ways, her voice, her whole sweet being, — yet created in him a powerful and profound unrest, and set him mourning for his lost years, for all the empty, weary, sorrowful years? Why might he not say an imperious longing, the hungry desire of a long-famished heart, had impelled him to seek her and to brave the perilous sweetness of her near presence at his side, alone with him in the still night? Why might he not? Ah, why? Silent, sad, tor-

mented, and blessed, he walked on with his peaceful air.

In that town any straight way, if pursued long enough, led to noble heights; broad roads, winding paths, short cuts, were cared for with the solicitude of that tiresome, exasperating yet often beneficent institution, a paternal form of government. Its frailties were many, but it had the grace of admirable forestry and rich gardens, like unto Paradise regained and handled according to best modern methods.

Monica walked slowly at first for she had been long indoors; but as they passed through quiet streets and began the long, fragrant ascent, past villas and walled gardens, she felt her strength return, and consciously loved the night, its tender mystery, its subtle, elusive beckoning. The bright day they had taken her out, with its wealth of blossom and odor, its laburnums and lilacs and syringa, had seemed remote. But this fair night was home; it comforted.

They stood side by side on a dusky height, leaned on a wall, and looked down upon the town in the valley. The brooding forest behind them, the luminous yet mist-veiled night, the balm of orchard and meadow, the whole-

some breath of distant farms, penetrated them with large and beneficent influence.

Long, low black rifts stretched along the horizon, merging in sombre thickly wooded hills. Over the town hung a gray smoky cloud through which the lights gleamed dully. A rash soft brook tumbled on inconsequently. Frogs far and near held council. Roses, acacia, and pungent honeysuckle impregnated the atmosphere. The night was so still even the poplar leaves above their heads had ceased their prophetic rustling. Down the steep slope of the broad highroad near them now and then a bicycle bell tinkled gayly, and lovers passed, arms interlaced, and voices intermingled low and warm in sweet folk song.

Arenberg had taken off his hat. His face, as he leaned on folded arms and gazed with thoughtful eyes not at the town but straight before him into the night, was clear and calm and of almost unearthly beauty. Monica remembered these words: "His soul is still. Like a holy treasure he guards its repose and from its depths draws counsel and help for the storm-tossed." It was good for her, the storm-tossed, to be with him here. He turned and looked at her, and she smiled wistfully but in confidence, in naturalness, with tender thank-

fulness and with a nameless sentiment without which she never yet had looked and never again could look upon his face, a touched recognition of his goodness, reverence for a being who had reached through suffering and knowledge a higher spiritual plane. That smile was hard for him to bear.

"How inexplicable it is that people prefer to stay in their boxes on such a night!" he said. "I wonder that the whole town doesn't come up on the hills. Not that I am benevolent enough to want a lot of fellows about here at the moment; but they don't know what they lose."

They were not far from the spot where Monica had stood alone when she first knew of Professor Steiner's death. At last she could share that sad burden. In her heart, in her life, was nothing which she could not lay before this friend. She told him she would like to explain to him the singular chain of events which had preceded that tragedy.

"You never need explain yourself to me," he replied, "but the smallest thing that concerns you interests me. That wretched affair occupied me not a little."

Then he told her how he had stood beneath her windows that night long since, and she

mentioned that she got as far as his threshold, and they looked at each other, moved and wondering.

In the soft, mysterious night, with gentle, regretful voice, she related briefly the salient features of the story. As she concluded, he was silent, looking far away. Because her wounds were not yet healed, and she had suffered so cruelly, and relating the facts awoke the old pain, she waited in strange suspense.

He was merely thinking how brave and good she was, and how alone, and of certain things he would do that instant if he might. But a sudden terror seized her.

"Do you not believe me?" she said.

"As in a god," said Arenberg, low and fervently, and neither of them observed that it was a singular answer.

Relieved, she rejoined simply:

"Then I should like you to read the letters."

Again they stood in silence side by side, needing no speech, their thoughts floating off together. Each marvelled at the peace of the night and the suggestion of the infinite. Each dwelt upon the mystery of pain and life's demands upon our poor strength. Each felt the other near. In Monica's sorrow was a new strain of submission. "You can bear every-

thing," he had said to her. Perhaps one could bear everything. Her heart was full of simple, childish memories, — her mother's smile; her hands; and her little ways; her jests and gayety; how she wore her hair; the kind of lace she liked; the odor of attar of roses in her upper drawer. A flood of light filled the valley. The dark hills stood guard. The earth looked like a sanctuary.

Softly as to himself, Arenberg spoke:

“ Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh;
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vöglein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch ! ”

XIV

"I SHOULD certainly interfere in some way, Mélanie?" Frau Selbitz said sharply.

"It is easy to tell the wonderful things you would do!" replied Frau von Arenberg, with irritation. The familiar tone between the sisters was not always suave, but they were apt to unite against a common enemy.

"I can assure you, if it were my Hermann —" Frau Selbitz' eyes snapped as if she had discovered her complaisant spouse in flagrant dereliction.

"Oh, Hermann!" exclaimed her sister, not with marked deference. "Hermann and Aurel are very different. You yourself, Orla, can do nothing with Aurel."

"I don't know about that. At all events, I shall not hesitate to speak with him. I shall tell him it is ridiculous."

"I am sure I am willing. It is ridiculous — and exasperating. A serious man, a professional man, ought to be ashamed of himself. On the contrary, he acts so serene it is quite

maddening. One might suppose they lived in the Happy Isles, if that is the place where people do as they like, with no regard for public opinion. He sends Egon or Bodo with a flower, or letter, or book in really the most barefaced manner. Her letters come straight to the house as if I were air. I don't know what they mean by it. In any little affair, a woman who respects herself takes the trouble to save appearances. You need n't laugh so maliciously, Orla. I'm sure you manage prudently enough."

"And you, Mélanie? Except, perhaps, on one occasion."

Frau Selbitz discussed the painful circumstance, in confidence, with a few chosen friends. She stated to each that she was distressed on dear Mélanie's account, and merely wished advice; of course it was a delicate matter.

With a volley of sparkles and smiles, she asked Baron Baretinsky what he really thought about it; if he believed in platonic affection. He, speaking with authority, declared there was no such thing. Besides, when a quiet, steady fellow like Arenberg decided to make a fool of himself about a woman, he was apt to get more entangled than a man who had

kept himself well in practice. Baretinsky stroked his tawny moustache. He was inclined to think they did not discuss the immortality of the soul quite all the time. Then Miss Randolph certainly had queer notions. For instance, she actually once asked him, etc., etc. Not that he took it amiss. A man never takes anything amiss that a charming woman says—and Miss Randolph was a very charming woman. Arenberg was a lucky dog. Lobanow would envy him. Lobanow himself had a decided *faible* in that direction. By the way, he, Baretinsky, had made a little conundrum, "Who wears Lobanow's fresh linen?" The two being good friends of Baron Lobanow, and that gentleman being, now and then, of a morning, eccentrically regardless of his toilet, vast was the mirth that ensued; and pyrotechnic display of smiles and teeth, and glittering black eyes, and admiring interjections, and fascinating fidgets had no end.

Frau Selbitz next, at Count Arco's one evening, approached Lobanow with some circumspection and an inward gleam of malicious delight. She had spoken with Baron Baretinsky, but of course, amiable as he was, it must be confessed he seemed a little super-

ficial in comparison with really intellectual men. Here she sparkled and fidgeted with much animation; but Lobanow for some reason was moody. She feared, she greatly feared Arenberg was seriously interested in that Miss Randolph who had such a bad record — poor Professor Steiner — that was, she knew, a positive fact — and young Forsythe of the British Legation, and Count This, and Captain That, and Lieutenant the Other. She was on the best terms with those common men in the editorial rooms, which was rather queer and Bohemian, was it not? That old Mr. Loring, who had an invalid wife, was continually running after her. Of course one could think what one liked about that. As to the Ehrensteins, they were, it seemed, very attentive and friendly with her, but it probably would not last. Mélanie was behaving like a saint. One could speak of such a thing only to an old friend like Lobanow, but really Arenberg was quite infatuated. People wondered a good deal about Miss Randolph's lights. They burned so late. Nobody knew why.

"I presume because Miss Randolph cannot see in the dark;" and Baron Lobanow, looking very clever and distinguished, in-

clined himself slightly before the little lady, whose neck at that instant he could have wrung with rapture, and moved off.

Like, yet unlike the gentle breeze that stirs the stiff hollyhock stalk, and kisses the opening rose, and flutters the vine leaves, and caresses the lily, Orla Selbitz fulfilled her mission.

Madame Baretinsky, speaking with authority, instructed her that it was a great mistake to make a fuss — and so useless. “Tell your sister to take no notice, and to order specially nice *entrées*. Besides, it may be all imagination. Have you happened to notice Arenberg’s eyes? You can always detect it in their eyes. Sascha shows it instantly in the eyes.” She spoke as if love were a light and frequent form of influenza.

At the Arcos the venomous breeze found an inviting field. The countess made her habitual protestation that she could not be expected to countenance the eccentricities of all Americans abroad. She thought Miss Randolph had already made herself sufficiently conspicuous. What with Professor Steiner, and Mr. Forsythe, and Baron Lobanow, and that infatuated old Mr. Loring, not to speak of his son, and This and That and the

Other, it was really getting rather too variegated. And now, Arenberg! Arenberg! It was incredible. They regarded one another with virtuous horror. Count Arco said he was astonished.

They had all been engaged for years in flirting much and often, but they instinctively perceived that Arenberg was sincere. Hence their moral indigestion. For a strong and deep friendship between a man and woman without the pale of matrimony was in their eyes a crime. Very bare shoulders, very bold glances, ribald jest, but half-veneered, a musky atmosphere of untruth, envy, and mocking lovelessness, the quick stab for the fallen, the smirk for the rising man, creeping servility before senile and tottering Highnesses, a large tolerance for frantic waltzing and conservatory-intermezzi in aristocratic houses, a tremendous respect for the holy union of a title and American dollars, such as Count and Countess Arco's, or such as Leo Uhlefeldt's and Florence Arco's would be, or such in which husband and wife walk together through life in yawning indifference, weary discontent, or pronounced animosity, and mentally less allied, giving each other less faith, respect, and honesty than average business

associates, — all this was moral. That which was accepted was, obviously, moral.

Arenberg might have whispered insolent flatteries to pretty women every night of his life, and made love — Baretinsky-love — to them with impunity, and waltzed madly with them, provided he cared only for their charming little masks, and, in general, to eat, drink, and be merry. For the most profound emotion of which he was capable, for a love that made life peace and heaven nearer, that exalted and ennobled, there was no room in society.

Meanwhile Arenberg was unaware of the pains his sister-in-law was taking in his behalf. What he felt, thought, and endured, he imparted to no one. His actual intercourse with Monica had thus far consisted in an exchange of letters, while she was staying at the Lorings' country place during the summer; an occasional letter since; a brief visit once a week, or ten or fourteen days, as his professional duties permitted, and one more long and lovely walk on the hills by night.

If alone, he sometimes feared he might not have sufficient strength for this relationship; curiously enough, Monica herself unconsciously reassured him. In her presence, that

which the world would have pronounced impossible often grew simple and clear. Yet he fought many battles, as an honest man must, confronted by this problem, and the great Saint Benedict had a voice in the matter.

That a doctor should now and then appear in the house of an old patient could create no comment whatever, Arenberg reasoned, reckoning without his Orla. A doctor has the right of way everywhere. Therefore Monica would be unmolested. As to Mélanie, — though they were not on terms of confidence, their innermost thoughts were strangers, one to the other, — yet he did not for an instant seek to disguise from her his new interest. Flowers and books he frequently sent to cheer his patients. It pleased him to send his little boys with such messages to Monica, and the children, it happened, liked to go.

Mélanie said, one day, in the sharp and querulous tone which she reserved for home use:

“You seem quite intimate with that Miss Randolph.”

“We are very good friends.”

“Is she ill?”

“On the contrary, admirably well.”

“How do you happen to know her?”

"She was ill last spring, when her mother died. I was called to her."

Mélanie was silent for a while.

"But now she is well, you continue your visits?"

"You know perfectly that I have little time for any pleasure. It is, in every sense, a rare pleasure when I see Miss Randolph," he returned quietly. "I have no greater."

It seemed to him fair to say as much, or as little as this to the woman, who, however remote from him, bore his name and was the mother of his children; and he knew no reason — in consideration of certain episodes in the past, and of the fact that Mélanie incessantly sought her own amusement, which consisted at present in long *tête-à-tête* with Count Arco — why he, on her account, need hesitate an instant.

"Well!" she exclaimed, and abruptly left the room.

Jealousy without love is not uncommon, but indisputably a most uncomfortable malady. In the category of human ailments, it should perhaps be classified with the stupendous vanity which unloving wives display on the strength of money which not they but their husbands have earned, or of worldly

honors which those henpecked beings have attained; ignoble ownership may prevail where love faileth. It was startling to Frau von Arenberg, that her husband, habitually pre-occupied with his profession, should interest himself in a woman devoid of pathological charm. His frankness irritated her, and she objected to the tone of infinite respect, of homage, which had sounded through his brief statement. Still, her vexation might have passed as any other mood were it not for Orla.

Orla for years had tried, in vain, to obtain some vantage-ground against Arenberg. He exasperated her beyond endurance. A mere brother-in-law, yet so gently and successfully recalcitrant. When she metaphorically put her small foot upon her big Hermann, and he neither squirmed nor gasped, it was but natural that she should attempt dominion in the adjacent region of her younger sister's domestic affairs. Hermann was brown and burly as Vulcan, yet he quailed. Aurel was slight, and pale, and mild, yet from any onslaught upon him she fell back powerless. When she was ill he was exceedingly kind, she could not deny. But, ordinarily, his expression of speculative, abstract interest, when at

a dinner she was conversing brilliantly upon subjects she had expressly prepared — and this fact she suspected he knew — or when she launched herself upon the subject of his family matters, was intolerable. Long ago, briefly, when they were all young, he had been, like Hermann, wax in her hands. She could not forgive Aurel that he had so speedily regained his freedom. She was always seeking to re-establish her supremacy, and could not refrain from restless, desultory attack. Her darts were wont to glance back from the fine armor of his tranquil impenetrability, but now she exulted.

As for Monica Randolph, when she merely passed in a crowded room, Frau Selbitz felt a strong and not inexplicable antipathy. For one was indigenous, the other exotic; one dark, the other fair; one was bright and fairly well read; the other, more or less equipped, worked openly in the literary field; moreover, Baron Lobanow, and Baron Baretinsky, and that pleasant Mr. Forsythe and Excellenz General Count Ehrenstein and other not insignificant persons had persisted in manifesting some interest in the stranger.

Orla Selbitz was not, however, the worst of women. Pretty, to many persons pleasing,

she had, like most of us, her softer moments, her good days. But nature had moulded her rather small and hard, and her training had not increased her spiritual stature. The vehemence of her action in this matter was, at all events, perfectly sincere.

In constantly inciting *Mélanie* to wrath, *Orla* was agitated by delight in the fray, an idea that she was defending her altars and her fires; indignation with *Arenberg's* unexpectedness; suspicion, ignorance, and dislike of the stranger, wounded vanity, jealousy, — in short, mixed motives, upon the whole, no more malevolent than such as may prevail in large movements to which we give fair names; popular patriotism, for instance, which also induces us to march out and ignorantly slay.

After a sinuous course of discussion with many persons, who, knowing *Arenberg*, for the most part gave the matter no second thought, and after expounding and expatiating unweariedly to *Hermann* and *Mélanie*, *Orla* finally approached *Aurel*, and with ominously resolute mien seated herself near his writing-table. He looked up inquiringly, heard her opening phrases, regarded her an instant with grave incredulity, got up, and opened the door wide.

"I must beg you, Orla," he said quietly, "to confine such — attentions to Hermann."

Why she at once obeyed the insistence of his eyes she could not afterwards explain, but found herself in stormy mood on the other side of the door, and flew to Mélanie to hold a long council of war.

Monica was working hard and better. Her pen had lost its perilous facility, and she occasionally said what she meant. She had written a couple of small books in the three years. So far as she remembered the manuscripts, — she had not read them in print, for she possessed a natural taste for good literature, — they were puny and anæmic infants. But the novel she had now begun promised to be more muscular. Arenberg was vastly interested in it. "Whether the little writing demon in her was the transfiguration of some poet who had lived many thousands of years ago, or a sublimated distillation of a whole horde of spooks," Arenberg assured her, he liked and was proud of him.

Arenberg was the first person whose influence was of positive help to her in her work. He never found fault with her for not being somebody else, but aided her to be more truly herself. His companionship was a profound

joy. Not only his wide range of knowledge, his familiarity with literature and languages, delighted her, but more and more he revealed an extreme gentleness, a large, general benevolence, a wise interest in small things, a way of always seeking the simple and the good. He transported her to a realm where was more space, more air. Her mother's death had led him into her life. Over their friendship brooded this sweet and solemn memory. His hand had sustained, his voice recalled her to life and duty. It would have been hardly possible for her at that time to express, in words, her sentiments for him. She did not question them, however. If one of the angels and archangels of the floating vision of her childhood had descended and stood before her, he would hardly have impressed her more than Arenberg, in some moments, — perhaps, indeed, less. For the patient heroism of his life she was beginning to perceive; and it must be easier to float about on wings and cry *Holy* than to be an overworked doctor with a delicate constitution.

In her attitude toward him was something which he found nobly fraternal. She was for him the one woman on earth, but often he

felt, with immense satisfaction, that in certain respects she was like a man-friend. To no person had he ever spoken with such unreserve. Many rich elements, as always in the strongest and best attachments, rendered their intercourse ever fresh, interesting, and sweeter. Monica loved all her dead loves, and loved them to the day of her death — and beyond. Keith, too, was a dead love now, as far away as her mother and Lilian. But this affection included them all. Arenberg gradually, imperceptibly, subtly, was becoming her home, her country, her family, her brother, her friend, her dearest love, her religion, her highest good. But so natural, so inevitable was this, she had not once thought of herself as being what is called "in love."

He was the blessing sent to her in her anguish. He lent a deeper significance to her life. It was an exceedingly busy life that winter. Many shipwrecked wanderers with tale of dire disaster found their way to her. She needed to join no benevolent club or society. Strange confidences, touching revelations and entreaties came continually unsought. Sometimes people whom she was aiding deceived her, which troubled her little. She saw no reason why falsehood

should be exclusively the prerogative of polite society. The fibs of the poor seemed indeed but a venial sin, — all things considered. In many ways, with Arenberg's wise counsel, she was working for and helping little children, and had great schemes for them in view. Altogether, with her newspaper work, her music, her book, and her active interest in human lives, her days were busier and more useful than before, and over them like a white radiance shone Arenberg's affection.

One afternoon, much to her surprise, Frau von Arenberg was announced. She came in bright and dark, and said smilingly she thought it was time she, too, should become acquainted with so good a friend of her husband and her little boys. Monica found this very natural and kind. The lively little lady chattered on, looked well at Monica, and exhaustively at the room. They had almost met so often, Mélanie said, she had determined, at last, to give herself the pleasure.

"Kill her with amiability," Orla had said. "Take the matter into your own hands. Control it. That is the first thing to do. Get control." Count Arco thought the idea excellent.

Mélanie decided, as she sat by Monica on the sofa, that she was not, after all the excitement, so dangerous as Orla imagined. Of course, if one cares for that style! — Mélanie preferred an altogether different style. The room looked not at all inviting — like a man's room: so many books and papers. She wondered how often Aurel came there, and what he found so very interesting in Monica, and what they talked about. With curious, bright, hard glances, Mélanie made her inventory.

Monica thought it good of her to come, and because she was Arenberg's wife, felt a sincere and rather wistful interest in her, would have liked to care for anybody or anything dear to him, remembered at the moment not a word of Elizabeth's disclosures, assumed Mélanie must be near to him, yet wondered instinctively if she understood him, for her conversation and her manner were as if she inhabited another world from his.

Monica asked her how he was. She had thought he looked very fatigued when she last saw him.

Mélanie replied, "Oh dear, yes; he raced about so it was natural he should look tired." But he was tough, she thought, — wiry. She

hardly saw him herself. He came in usually after lunch, and irregularly to dinner.

"Never marry a doctor, Miss Randolph," she said, with some bitterness in her laugh. "A doctor's wife has a miserable, neglected existence, I assure you. She might as well have no husband as one never on hand."

Monica heard the discontent, but mistook its cause, — thought it a note of natural affection, when it was but a note of selfishness, — believed it meant longing for Arenberg's companionship instead of a huge impatience with his profession, and with his total indifference to the only kind of life she craved. She was small and childish, like her Egon, and petulant — Monica saw only feeling. Arenberg seemed so unutterably precious, and here was his poor little wife complaining that she never saw him. Perhaps this was the motive of the visit. I am not in the world to make people suffer, thought Monica. With a warm rush of emotion, and one of her sudden impulses, face to face, eye to eye, she looked at the woman so near her, and said steadily:

"Do you want me to go away? Because, if you ask me, I will go."

"Oh dear, no," replied Frau von Arenberg, shaking her head airily.

Monica went on, very pale :

"I am glad of the opportunity to say to you how attached I am to Dr. Arenberg. It is not possible to know him without affection. He has been wonderful to me. I have had losses, and he has helped me to bear them. His is the highest nature I have known, and the most lovable. I care more deeply for him than for any one in the world. But nothing binds me. I can go anywhere; I will, if you ask me."

"She is queer," thought Mélanie. "Fancy me telling Countess Arco how devoted I am to the count!" Aloud: "I trust I am sufficiently a woman of the world not to take a little affair too seriously. On the contrary, I pray, amuse yourselves as much as you like. And if ever you have the whim to come to see him in his office hours, he would be charmed, no doubt."

Monica failed to understand this flippant amiability and talk of whims and amusing themselves. She felt out of accord with her visitor, yet still desirous of finding her friendly, lovable. Mélanie took leave cordially, after begging her to come to afternoon tea on the following day. Thus spake Orla.

Monica found the sisters exceedingly viva-

cious, and was conscious that Frau Selbitz and she were not precisely elective affinities. Frau von Arenberg she was conscientiously trying to like. But conscience never yet controlled sympathy. What they deemed important, desirable, and indispensable was the reverse to her; for example, breathless interest in the movements of their Majesties, whether they were in this or that castle, had driven in the park or on the hills, how many minutes the prince had spoken with some blissful mortal at a ball, and other equally astounding and portentous incidents.

Count Arco came in, amiable and idle, and contributed the very latest court news. Monica knew that Frau Selbitz was watching her constantly, and that benevolence dwelt not in those beady black eyes. She thought, without condemnation, merely with a clear sense of being alien to this group, that it was well she had not to drink tea with them every day. Still she endeavored to exclude Mélanie because she belonged to Arenberg.

"He is in his study, and has no suspicion who is here," Mélanie said, laughing. "He does not yet know I, too, have the honor of your acquaintance. If you happen to be in the mood, pray go in — he probably is closeted

with ailing butchers and bakers, but he would be charmed, no doubt."

They all laughed. This was what Orla called control.

"I should hardly like to disturb him," Monica replied, flushed, and wondered if her reply were not foolish.

Self-consciousness was not usually her weakness, but their jest for that which she revered, confused her. Had they enticed her here merely to mock? She pictured Arenberg with his butchers and bakers, their aches and their lives the better for his ministrations, and suddenly she was calm and comforted.

He evinced no surprise or disapproval when his wife, with a certain triumphant intonation, announced that she had been to see Miss Randolph, and the interview had passed off very well.

"Why should it not?" he said, with a slight smile. "There was hardly a necessity to have it rival the celebrated meeting of Queen Elizabeth and Maria Stuart."

"And yesterday she was here to tea," Mélanie continued, and afterwards assured Orla that Aurel acted most indifferent.

"Acts, yes, acts — He is a good actor. But have her here often. Control them."

Arenberg, having no ambition to control anything beyond his own affairs, reasoned that his wife was a free agent and had the right to make acquaintances and invite ladies to tea precisely as seemed good to her. Yet could he have prevented her action, he would. She gave him, indeed, no opportunity; and had she intimated her design, the slightest word of opposition on his part would but have roused her suspicion and precipitated the meeting. He distrusted Orla, and vaguely foresaw rough weather.

It was as if Monica and he had left their still island, and put off in a frail bark toward stormy waters. But the first night she came to dinner the atmosphere was innocuous, and he experienced a deep yet sad sort of happiness as he beheld her under his own roof, and among the familiar things of his daily life. She saw his queer, large study, with its niches and alcoves, and strange instruments, and books from floor to ceiling, and the curiosity-shop department, and his Murillo, and the appointments of his writing-table, and Saint Benedict.

"A nice dark-tower, crawly sort of place," she thought.

"Uncommonly graceful figure — beautiful thing, Arenberg," said Baron Lobanow.

"But ghastly," added Baretinsky. "You doctors can stomach anything. You have no sense of the disagreeable."

"We get rather hardened in time, happily."

"Who is the old chap?"

"Only a monk. I picked it up once in Nuremberg. It is good old work. Beautiful anatomy."

"Fine!" said Lobanow.

"Upon my word, Arenberg," exclaimed Baretinsky, jovially, "I believe he is a bit thinner than you!"

"Yes, in point of leanness I can emulate almost anybody, — saint, sinner, or greyhound."

Monica silently examined the hooded monk, knew not who he was, but whom he was strangely like. The emaciated yet noble features of the bowed head under the cowl, the inscrutable, downward glance, with the mystery and lofty sadness, the restraining finger on the lip; and even the tall, slight form, in spite of clinging robe and girdle of rope, and the large cross lying along the arm, — were well known to her. But then so many exquisite and ideal heads suggested Arenberg.

The experienced Madame von Baretinsky,

after thorough inspection, whispered to Orla there was not the least indication of "it" in Arenberg's eyes. Orla could trust her diagnosis. But, on the other hand, Orla observed, and duly called Mélanie's attention to the fact, that Arenberg's patients seemed to be in a very flourishing condition that evening; at all events, contrary to his custom, he hung about a good hour after dinner.

Thereafter, for some weeks Monica found herself frequently in this little circle, where she never once felt happy. Yet if Frau von Arenberg was kind enough to constantly invite her and come for her to run over to the Arcos' or to Frau Selbitz', and display to the world a distinct sort of intimacy, — the outward intimacy of but hollow intercourse, — it seemed ungracious and ungrateful to repulse a healthful liberality of sentiment which Monica was well aware few women possessed.

These invitations made large inroads on her time, and she was nearer Arenberg and infinitely more content, alone in her own study. Elizabeth and Eleanor complained, they hardly saw her, and never, now, had their audacious little midnight discussions in which they three set the world to rights. It was all

unsatisfactory and depressing to Monica; and while she yielded to circumstances she reproached herself for the great waste of time, and determined to free herself gradually from the demands of a society for which she had no aptitude.

Several insignificant incidents proved to her beyond the possibility of doubt that Orla Selbitz meant mischief. In her presence some subtle instinct flung out signals of danger.

One evening, at a dinner at the Arenbergs', Monica happened to say, idly, as Lobanow alluded to the "blonde Achilles," that she thought blonde men were more sympathetic; at least, she personally understood them better than the Othellos. Some trifling jest ensued. Suddenly from the other end of the table a pointed voice exclaimed:

"But Professor Honold, in Munich, is not blonde, Miss Randolph."

A short pause of expectation, but long enough to recall to Monica an all but forgotten episode. — Ultra genteel persons are advised to skip this paragraph, which is rather shocking. — Long ago, she, Elizabeth, and Lal Loring took a short excursion into the country with a certain learned man and his wife, who, having completed their quest sooner than they

anticipated, proposed going on to Munich, which was near. After but one day there they returned home; the young people, having special art treasures in view, decided to follow them by the evening train. While Monica was rapidly outlining an article for the *Panyphone*, Elizabeth and Lal Loring wandered forth, wasted their substance, and brought back porcelain pictures, and nice little silver monks, and empty pockets.

Before their friends went, a careful discussion of finances had taken place. But painted porcelain and silver! There was no time to telegraph home, little for counsel, and it was imperative that they should leave by the seven o'clock train, for Monica was needed at the *Nosegay* office on the following morning, Elizabeth at the Conservatory, and Lal Loring was more than due at his University. Money enough to pay their hotel bill and buy their tickets, they had not, — not indeed enough for either one or the other. The two culprits jeered and goaded Monica. Elizabeth said it was nice and Bohemian. Lal Loring suggested pawning his watch, thought the hotel man might trust them. Then there was the American Consul. It was his duty to succor distressed compatriots.

But the Consulate was far, and perhaps he was not there.

"Where is your contempt for money now, Monica?"

"Unshaken. I am going to Professor Honold. He is the only person I know in the place. He is a gentleman. He devoted hours to us yesterday, and begged me, if he could serve us in the slightest way to-day, to command him. I would rather be indebted to him for one half-day — they will send it from the bank the first thing to-morrow morning — than to have to make explanations to the hotel people."

But as they drew near the Museum, and mounted the great stairway, Monica quaked.

"Oh," she said, "it is very distressing. I have the proper contempt for money, but how do I know he has!"

"Clear case of the barking dog," returned Elizabeth, cheerfully. "The little boy's mother asked him how he could be afraid, since the barking dog never bites. 'I know the barking dog never bites,' said the boy, 'but how do I know the dog knows it?'"

With this meagre moral support, Monica presented herself and her pitiful plight before the cordial man with his great brown beard.

He divined her errand almost before she began, made the matter so simple, so natural, so altogether easy, that one was tempted to infer this little recreation lay in the line of his daily duties; and Monica's contempt for money and faith in human nature triumphed superbly.

But now, as the sharp little voice challenged her, and she perceived instinctively all these people were acquainted with the tale, and could well distort its light structure, she had, for an instant, stage fright; then, slowly looking upon her surroundings, "like a Horatius Cocles in miniature," Arenberg told her afterwards, she regarded the smiling enemy, and it was really but a few seconds since she heard those startling words, "But Professor Honold, in Munich, is not blonde," before she answered clearly and deliberately:

"No, but he has a blonde soul."

Because the men laughed, Orla Selbitz liked her less than ever. That same evening they were discussing Rome, and an incident at an audience of the Pope.

"Did you really kneel and kiss his hand?" asked Mélanie.

"Certainly."

"What principles for a Protestant!" said Orla.

"Oh, I am not a rabid protester," returned Monica, with a little laugh. "Besides, I would kiss the hand of any venerable man."

"It is surprising how diametrically our tastes differ," remarked Baretinsky.

These things were mere pin-pricks, Monica reflected, but Orla Selbitz's inimical scrutiny followed her persistently, and kept her always on guard. Moreover, to meet Arenberg in this superficial, fruitless fashion, and in an atmosphere where he, as little as she, breathed freely, awoke in her an inexplicable unrest. In February an illness of Frau von Arenberg interrupted a state of affairs which, with a strong crescendo had been growing to Monica more and more unedifying.

In nearly three weeks she had not seen Arenberg, but had received from him one or two brief messages, thoughtful, singularly charming and characteristic, as were all his letters. She was working quietly and patiently, though longing always for his presence. She heard from him that, besides much work on all sides, he had somewhat of a hospital at home, both children being ill. He had no prospect of coming to her, yet greatly desired to see her, having the references she wished, and would she, if she were not too busy, be

so very good as to come in that afternoon for a few minutes.

Monica as she went out asked Frau Erhardt to kindly beg Elizabeth if she should want her, to wait; she should not be gone long, Dr. Arenberg wished to see her an instant. It was a blustering, slippery, snowy day. Just before her Monica saw Frau Selbitz pick her way across an icy spot, and enter the Arenberg house. From the waiting-room, among the butchers and bakers, poor dears, Monica could have slipped in to the study unobserved, which however did not occur to her. To save time, she sent in her name, was shown an instant into the drawing-room, and immediately into Arenberg's study. In the long clasp of their hands, the meeting of their glad glances, was infinite tenderness, — an essential caress. Monica loosened her furs, and sat down in the chair he pulled near his desk. They had not spoken a half-dozen trivial words, but both were smiling as if life were pure sunshine, when a door was violently flung open, and a little woman in a voluminous green tea-gown entered with precipitation. Mélanie's face was convulsed with rage, and colored deep yellow by jaundice.

XV

THE two by the table rose involuntarily.

Mélanie came forward.

"Miss Randolph," she cried, "this is disgraceful. Why are you here behind my back and taking advantage of my illness?"

"Mélanie!" exclaimed Arenberg, pale and suddenly taller.

She advanced upon Monica, who, knowing all this was most awful, instead of consciously realizing its awfulness, began in a senseless fashion to remotely watch their three figures, hers and theirs, as if they were on the stage, and to wonder childishly at that yellow face, how any face could possibly be so yellow, how singularly vivid it looked in contrast to that green, and what process actually took place in the liver and the blood to render a face so yellow. And all the time she perceived the sharpness of feature, eye, and voice, the uncurbed aggressive violence. She had never seen a woman in such a frenzy of anger—never listened to so wild a volley of insult. Arenberg stepped again between them.

"Mélanie!" he repeated low and strongly, as if to recall her to reason, and laid his hand upon her shoulder. She shook it off contemptuously and continued her "Words — words — words."

Out of the depths of Monica's condition of psychological incongruity rose a clear and cool perception that this was a very trying moment for Arenberg. She also observed that he looked extremely handsome. She wondered what he would now do. But most of all she wondered at Mélanie's yellow face.

"Miss Randolph was good enough to come down," Arenberg began, as soon as the torrent of words ceased long enough to permit him to speak, "for the simple reason that I expressly begged her to come."

His perfect control and intense gravity seemed to impress the irritated little woman — already conscious her outbreak was extreme. Monica had not moved, felt not the slightest sense of responsibility, or any necessity of response.

Arenberg approached, took her by the hand, led her across the room, and said with sadness:

"Forgive me that I unwittingly caused you this," kissed her hands, and closed the study

door upon her. She passed out, attended by Wolf, and quiet, but when she reached the street, found herself trembling violently.

"What does this mean, *Mélanie*?" *Arenberg* asked, pale and stern.

She sobbed hysterically. From her incoherent complaints he gathered that *Orla* was hateful enough to want to wear *Mélanie*'s Italian peasant costume, the most becoming thing she had, to the *Arcos*' fancy ball, to which she could not go. *Orla* intended to be photographed in it too! And *Orla* had seen Miss *Randolph* coming, and it was detestable of her. Everybody was detestable. *Mélanie* threw herself upon the sofa, wept copiously, said she was ill, wished she were dead, had gone into a cold room to get the costume, and her throat hurt her.

Without a word, *Arenberg* examined her throat. All that night he sat up with her. Already ill, excited, exhausted, she was seized with diphtheria in malignant form.

It was no time for reproaches, and they were, he knew, useless. During the night-watches, as he tended his patient, he beheld many pictures of the past.

A young man, hardly more than a boy, fond of study and work; of art, inclined to gentle

melancholy, full of impossible ideal schemes for the good of humanity, extremely ignorant of woman — but adoring her in passionate visions of beauty and perfect bliss — that youth at the University knew an older student, Selbitz by name, and later in another town was invited to his house. The wife was pretty, vivacious, and hospitable — unceasing in her attentions to the young baron with his eccentric taste for the medical profession. Soon she sent for a younger sister, fresh from school. Dinners, picnics, dances and endless opportunity were provided bounteously. The youth and the maiden were cooped up insidiously together. He did not instinctively care for her nor she for him. At first much in her repelled him. But the astute young wife played providence, the sister was always there, the parties on foot, by boat, on horseback succeeded, wherever they failed, in inducing one long tête-à-tête. He was young, his temperament amorous, the girl was young and near — pushed, as it were, into his arms. They became engaged. It was not long before he was aware of their utter incompatibility. All the billing and cooing in the world was not sufficient to blind him to the fact that there was a singular thinness of mental atmosphere

and at times a remarkable hardness of sentiment in this little person. Not one thought from the inner chambers of his mind could he lay before her. But he was gentle with his two-and-twenty years and timidly averse to giving pain—inclined to procrastinate, to temporize. When, however, ugly and violent scenes about trifles occurred and seemed to separate him world wide from her, when he realized that she cared not a whit for anything that he held dear, a great disillusion restored his judgment. He had been a fool, but he did not love this girl. He saw too she would be happier with another type of man. There was absolutely no likeness, no sympathy between them, no common interest. Often enough she seemed distinctly happier when other men were present. He intimated his convictions to Selbitz, who submitted them to his wife, who with her inherent tendency to control, scolded little Mélanie into shape, whipped her, so to speak, into docility and made, via Hermann, a splendid appeal to Arenberg's chivalrousness, honor and delicacy—qualities which he unfortunately possessed in quixotic superabundance. When a man of his standing drew back, it hurt the girl for life. This may be a debatable question for impartial men. "For

life" is large measurement. But when an honest young fellow of two-and-twenty is guiltily aware that he has kissed a child of seventeen wildly and innumerable times in a dark wood and elsewhere, if an older man solemnly invokes such tremendous ancestral apparitions as knightliness and generous protection to the feebler sex, the boy is apt to succumb. Arenberg was very miserable. He knew too that Mélanie would be happier with another type of man,—the gayest sort of lieutenant. Her lightness appalled him even more than her tempers. But Selbitz encouraged him, insisted little differences occurred between all lovers; Orla saw that rich opportunities never failed; Mélanie was pretty, had bright moods, and was the only woman he had ardently kissed: he was procrastinating, visionary, indulgent, and he married her.

There she lay in painful snatches of fevered sleep. He sat by the shaded light, and, dead tired, regulated the atomizer. The compresses and medicines were in order. Her pulse was rapid, her temperature high, but in the last two hours, not perceptibly increased. Occasionally he went to glance at the boys.

He beheld another picture. A wedding journey. The youthful husband, in spite of

past doubts and fears, enamored, romantic, oblivious, blissful. A drive over a noble mountain pass. Arrival in an hotel on a height. Scenery magnificent. Sudden discovery of negligence of luggage on the part of the bridegroom. The bride has no toilette for dinner. Scene — tempestuous attack — floods of tears. A bit of temper is no harm, say some men — but this lovelessness, on his wedding day, froze this man's soul.

Arenberg renewed the compresses, gave some orders to the boys' nurse, administered the medicine and steadily directed the spray of the atomizer. He pressed his hand upon his heart. It was a very ill-regulated heart that night.

Other pictures advanced and retreated. The first years? Well, he had loved no one else and never hated her. But the appalling want of sympathy! It was like a marriage between beings of two different species — something impossible — monstrous. Still, they were mated for life. In spite of the convictions of his brain, his warm heart sought happiness with her, sought to make her happy, sought desperately to deceive itself. The two boys came. He clung to his traditions of marriage, family, the holiness and sweet, conciliatory

power of childhood. But as he daily returned, worn out, from his first grappling with the grim foes of physical humanity, to sharp petulance, chronic dissatisfaction, lovelessness to him and no visible joy in the children, obstinate social ambitions, he grew weary and, striving no more, endured his home — and devoted himself ever more ardently to his professional life.

He opened all the casements, let the night air blow for some moments through the room — with difficulty induced Mélanie to swallow a little nourishing drink, turned her pillows, touched her forehead, her breast, her wrist, sat down and regulated the fall of the life-giving spray. It was three o'clock in the morning.

Another picture rose before him. A dashing, handsome lieutenant — a cousin of his, a guest in his house, a dancer, a winner at races and baccarat, a merry fellow, and no scoundrel, though over fond of women — not woman — and under fond of books. It was compromising — the affair. Divorce would have been attainable. Arenberg seriously considered it — or separation. But the young children, the traditions of family. Besides, Mélanie wept, and accused him of neglect, and Arenberg loved no one. He was at heart a

sad and patient man — tame, as he called himself. Moreover, he recognized with immense compassion the inevitableness of things. He had pondered much upon Mélanie's nature and training. The result of these factors was correct. Logically and humanly she was not to blame. He was most at fault, having married this young thing whom he knew to be utterly unsuited to him. Had he been less dreamy, less timid, weak, and malleable, truer to his convictions, manly and energetic, this wretched union would not have taken place.

Orla had intentionally flung into his young and yearning arms a kissable girl. Was it just that a few foolish kisses should decide a man's life? Baretinsky thought otherwise and suffered not at all. But he had an indulgent, a motherly companion.

Suddenly Mélanie opened her eyes, and with extreme difficulty spoke:

"Am I going to die, Aurel?"

"Oh no," he replied, with his mild professional smile. "You are doing very well."

She saw him bending over her, kind, solicitous, his face impenetrable.

Again her lips moved.

"I suppose I was rather hateful," she whispered.

"May I tell Miss Randolph you were ill and excited, and right it?"

"Yes," she murmured.

Presently she reopened her eyes and motioned with her hand. He leaned over her. Very feebly and painfully she said:

"Ask her from me to continue to be your friend."

"That is a kind thought, *Mélanie*," he returned warmly, and recognized it as a noble victory over herself — whether it lasted or not.

She drowsed again.

No, he had never hated this woman. She was the associate of his youth and the mother of his children. He wished her well. He could never intentionally cause her unnecessary pain. She was not personally at fault, that every chord and fibre of their natures were at variance. But the miserable, miserable years! Slowly they passed in review, the sombre, comfortless, lost years.

And the future, considered practically? Divorce? Separation? But *Mélanie* had since that time long ago incurred no conventional reproach and would never consent to what she regarded as social degradation. The real social degradation was the life they two led

together. But Monica—he knew with absolute certainty she too would reject such a step, that the mere possibility would never of itself enter her thoughts. Had all this come years ago—but now—what had he to offer? All men were dying men—he rather more moribund than most.

But he loved her immeasurably, with the strength of his sorrow, the strength of his longing, the strength of his unassuaged man's heart. He loved her, soul and body, body and soul, undivided—and the aggregate of human suffering would be, he believed, considerably less if the heads in hieroglyphic mitres had not been troubling themselves all these centuries to separate the inseparable. He probed his deepest heart. He found there nothing to blush for, before Monica, his wife or himself—not even when he considered all contingencies.

What had the mother said whose dead hand led him to her child? *Keep her life pure, keep her soul white.* What was pure? What was white? He smiled—superbly. As if anything this world could do to her, anything in the universe could stain the purity of that most chaste nature. Still—

He ministered to Mélanie's needs and re-

garded her and all her life with immense compassion. But this was the essence of his solemn thought:

“There is no room in the world for my heart’s love. There ought to be room for it. In exactly this situation, there ought to be a solution, offering no harshness to this woman, my wife only in name: — no affront to her prejudices or her vanity, entailing no sacrifice of her idols; a solution which should harm no hair of my children’s heads, but rather bless them with more sunshine; a solution acceptable to all three and to the community at large — a just, kind, simple, and sane solution.” He divined it, saw it clearly.

But society would execrate it — the society he knew so well, Courts, the nobility, the middle classes, the miserable poor. And it was they — they — whom his scheme would shock. Ah, the ineffable irony! To-day his sane and simple solution would wound their sensibilities and alarm their virtue. One day, after changes, growth, enlightenment, inevitable regeneration, emancipated men and women would stand side by side in purer atmosphere and on holier ground — but he and Monica and Mélanie would have long since passed over into the great silence,

Monica returned home in despair and cut to the heart by the trenchant cruelty of that scene. Was her creed, then, so unknown, so impossible, so preposterous that no other woman could share it? Elizabeth and Eleanor, yes — but they were not wives. Was there no wife on earth capable of loving a man perfectly, and leaving him free? Was love but ownership? And Mélanie — what was in her heart for Arenberg, since she could pain him so sorely! Why had she come, sought Monica out, sanctioned the friendship, invited her, run after her, made much of her, given her in every way to understand she was welcome, then turned in jealousy upon her? She was so secure and unsuspecting. It was all incredible. She comprehended nothing, not Mélanie's motives, not her angry attack, least of all, her sentiments toward Arenberg.

Words were spoken not pleasant for a woman to hear. They fell like blows. They tingled now that all was over. Monica resented them. But her faith in Arenberg was her consolation and her stronghold. He comprehended all that perplexed her. He would show her the way. Suddenly, from the past, still living but far far receded, came a memory of her own weakness: of restless-

ness at the mere suggestion that Keith took pleasure in Kitty's home: and Keith had little joy—and Keith was always noble. She remembered that she had felt deprived of her rights when his letters ceased to come—that she had pleaded, remonstrated and implored. In true love—yes. But true love has no rights except the sovereign right of giving. She made a solemn covenant with herself which according to her strength she kept.

With wandering thoughts Monica listened to the Frau Professor at dinner, who said a friend was coming from Bonn to stay awhile with her—Monica would like her. She was indeed better suited to Monica than to the Frau Professor, and years younger, and poetical, while she, as Monica knew, was prose itself. Still the friendship was a good one and had come about in an odd way which she had never mentioned to any one. Dr. von Arenberg, she suspected, was aware of it—but she did not mind telling Monica, who had suddenly begun to listen.

They—Professor Erhardt and she—were staying in a little inn in the Black Forest, where he had been ordered one summer for his chest. His lungs were already very delicate. A little widow with a frail boy of five or six

soon arrived and they were all much together, in the woods the livelong day.

Now the professor was poetical. That was his hobby. And Monica knew what she was. During their engagement and the first years of their marriage, he had hardly missed the poetical element in her, he had been poetical enough for both. But as the years went on, and he discovered she cared nothing, absolutely nothing, for his verses, knew nothing about them, it was of course rather depressing to him. To go spouting your verses to yourself all the time can hardly be very entertaining.

“Well, in the Black Forest, under the pines, he and the little widow read poetry, wrote poetry, lived poetry, and my husband was blissful. They would have bored me to death if they had not made me terribly unhappy. For my husband and I were a very devoted loving couple. That I can say with truth. Perhaps because we had no children — which was always a great grief to me — we were the more united. I know people think otherwise, but I have observed it is sometimes the fact. I passed some very uncomfortable days, took my sewing, went off alone and was miserably jealous. For I saw he was very fond of her, and she was pretty and sweet,

“Then one day I began to think plainly and honestly. I said to myself: That little woman can never take away what lies between my husband and me — all the years and affection — not in all eternity — and if she can give him something I cannot, why should she not, if it makes them both happier? So I gulped down my moods, which was no easy process — and sulked no more. When, early in the winter, he told me on his death-bed no man ever had a dearer wife and I had never given him an hour’s pain, I thanked my God that though He had not seen fit to make me poetical, He had given me common sense. For what if I had meanly deprived my husband of his happiness and must reproach myself after his death?”

She wiped her eyes and Monica regarded her in gratitude, in wonder — as if wisdom had proceeded from the mouths of babes and sucklings. Without the aid of your philosophy, this simple woman, led by the loving kindness of love to overthrow love’s jealousy, had made a sacred truth her own.

One white rose came the next morning, with a few words to the effect that Monica was good and strong enough to quietly bear that storm of unjust anger — and to forgive. Before the deplorable scene *Mélanie* was already

ill and greatly excited by quite other matters. Now she was suffering much. In very gentle words Arenberg framed her message of regret. Merely because he said as usual, "*You can bear it,*" Monica became quiet, through his strength, not her own.

When—at last—after many days—he came, they stood holding yearning tender hands and gazed, speechless, revealing all, into each other's eyes.

At length Monica spoke—low, each word a throb.

"Shall I go away? I will go, any hour, if you bid me. If I unwittingly do harm—hurt any soul—if I cause grief—if I take what is not mine—I will leave you—now or any day to come."

He pale, beautiful, and firm, replied :

"You do no harm. You hurt no soul. You cause no grief. You take only that which is your own, which never belonged to any one—never was, at all, until you came."

"Remember, I have said it. I hold myself ready to go," and clinging, constraining love, like an overcharged atmosphere, floated about the man and the woman, enveloped and penetrated them through and through—body and soul.

His face, all strength and sweetness, but paler—in his eyes a yearning as across a world, he still holding her hands, answered :

“I shall remember. I knew you would say it. I know you. But the only reason why you should ever go, would be that I were not master of the situation — and I believe I am.”

Whereupon he fainted.

She thought his heart would never beat again, but it did — this time.

Monica stayed.

They walked those lovely hills together many times. Late, late in the night, in starlight, in rain, in wind and storms: white nights when the great woods clothed in snow gleamed glorious like a mystic temple not made with hands; dark dense nights, warm sweet-breathed, heavy with passion. They two, on the dusky heights above the blaze of the town, the world down in the valley; they two alone, above it all, far from it all, at peace as if in paradise.

No thought of that world made them troubled or afraid. They were sure. They loved, with neither bounds nor exactions and content with what the world would call little, but which they knew to be life's supreme essential good.

When a fierce hunger of the heart seized

them, that great human natural and right longing for more — always for more — and therein is the very fire of life, — and these two never were cold lovers, be it proclaimed, — they remembered with pity their brothers and sisters. Valiant priests and nuns; mothers and wives mourning their beloved dead; the cripples, the bedridden, the blind, the abject poor and stunted, loveless hearts; careworn men and women cruelly chained in wedlock, like convicts in the galley, and never by any chance breathing that breath of perfect sympathy which frees our fettered souls. They remembered their poor sisters in brothels, their hapless brothers the monarchs, unfree, never hearing truth; their brothers in prison-cells, their brothers in asylums; and the whole unsatisfied, insatiable desire, the unceasing cry of anguish that mounts from this earth by day and by night. They remembered with tender awe:

“Two shall be born a whole wide world apart,
And speak in different tongues, and have no thought
Each of the other's being — and no need; —
And these o'er unknown seas, to unknown lands
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death,
And all unconsciously shape every act,
And bend each wandering step to this one end —
That one day out of darkness they shall meet
And read life's meaning in each other's eye.

“And two shall walk some narrow way of life
So nearly side by side that should one turn
Ever so little space to left or right
They needs must stand acknowledged face to face
And yet with wistful eyes that never meet,
With groping hands that never clasp — and lips
Calling in vain to ears that never hear
They seek each other all their weary days,
And die unsatisfied — and this is Fate.”

And the two on the heights deemed their lot
blessed beyond desert or expectation, hope or
prayer, and were still.

Yet he never for her sake turned one step
aside from his straight, hard path of duty. She
never once called or beckoned or sought him.
They could have obliterated themselves, one
for the other. She could, had this been his
will, have found the way for him to a woman
dearer and sweeter than herself, and turned
away, and never seen his face again, yet
blessed him still. When he would question
himself and her if it were right to appropriate
so great love since he could not shape for her
the outward fashion of his life, and others,
good men and true, could, her answer rang
sweet in his ears as a glad peal of music from
some larger, purer world.

He lived his patient life of sacrifice, and
healed and helped and comforted and blessed

his fellow-creatures, often less weary and less ill than he. They loved him well. Men and women loved him, and Monica was glad for the women as for the men — for all who found joy and sustenance in his strong and tender presence. Each time he left her, some inner voice warned she might never look into his eyes again, and that thought made him sacred beyond all words. Yet she could see him go, and their intercourse was mostly glad and simple, with jest and gentle talk about everyday things.

She too worked in many ways, and took long journeys when her duty required. “ ‘Wander forth,’ says the Koran, ‘for God’s earth is rich and spacious,’ ” he would tell her cheerfully, though at such times it was to him as if his soul had flown from him, and he wondered that earth and sky mourned not and that the streets looked gay and full and unconcerned. Presently he would chide his self-importance, and bid himself do what each day demanded, and — wait. Thus they taught each other to look up — to be brave — to endure.

In a lonely hamlet, on an island in the Baltic, she was working one summer. It was a place she knew and loved. A village of fishermen and pilots, simple, clannish, strong folk, with a

dignity of their own, and, when once their reserve melted, kindness and faithfulness for the stranger. Only a few cottages and a watch tower on a narrow point of land over which all winds swept and boomed on stormy nights. But there were tiny garden plots where sweet old-fashioned flowers grew, and rolling meadows beyond the dunes, and a beautiful wood of oaks and beeches and a group of bold cliffs, and beautiful fair-haired children, and the kindly serious folk — slow men with golden beards and kingly manners, who led austere, perilous lives and were content. Their wives in queer headgear, modest, good women, demure and docile, cramped by conventions as rigid as court etiquette and as unaccountable — and there were stillness, solitude, sunshine, and the sea.

Monica rented a pilot's house, a tiny cottage on the beach below the wood, and sheltered by the great trees and rising land behind, while the surf at the front could beat against her window-panes. The long sands curved off quietly to the left, the cliffs rose at the right, a glorious breadth of ocean and sky lay out before her, and one blue coast line, hazy and remote. Great merchantmen from distant lands passed far away across her vision,

and sloops with tawny sails, and gleaming, dipping fisher boats.

It was some weeks since she had heard from Arenberg. She was not impatient, or more uneasy than when they were in the same town — only full of longing. She worked and thanked all gods for him, and bore the separation — for this was part of her covenant. She knew it to be a weary time for him, the last weeks preceding his summer rest, and that his exhaustion was extreme. She came away reluctantly, but had been asked to prepare some sketches of this island folk before a given date, and neither she nor Arenberg ever flinched before the pain of necessary absence or evaded the exactions of regular work. In respect of dutifulness, she had learned to imitate him, if afar off. She knew from him his boys were happy in the country, his wife travelling with the Arcos and others in the Tyrol, and that, on account of a little matter connected with a young colleague, he had delayed for a few days his journey to some baths where he hoped to restore to his corpse a respectable amount of vigor for the autumn work. She smiled proudly, knowing it was some great service for the young colleague. Arenberg was so generous to young doctors;

was always bearing them in his hands. After this little she heard no more, and waited, finishing her sketches, working on a novel and teaching fishermen's children to swim.

This last employment she undertook as an imperative duty. When in mythology a triton woos a mortal maiden and bears her away to his deep-sea cave—that may sound attractive. But the sobs of mothers and the rugged grief of seafaring men when their children are brought home drowned—close to the shore—in shallow water—Monica found heart-breaking. Not a man in the place could swim, no woman of course, and no child.

Monica had known of many quite useless superfluous disasters of this sort. Just recently, three girls were drowned—all bathing near the shore in still water. A young child ventured a little too far, and the others, trying to help her, were lost with her; one, the oldest, a girl of fourteen, the pride of the hamlet. Monica proposed her scheme to the village fathers, and it was accepted thankfully for the boys, but declined for the girls, as unfitting. She persisted however, and finally persuaded her intimate friend the Burgo-master and her other friends, Petersen the schoolmaster, Kamp the pilot and Thom the

fisherman, that there was nothing specially womanly in drowning and by dint of much energy and some diplomacy, began her natorial mission, correctly and scientifically with the methodical motions taught first to a class of girls on the shore — while the boys cooled their impatience out of sight.

She calmly told the astonished little maids they should teach their older brothers soon, and doubtless she thereby set that wicked ferment, the Emancipation of Woman, bubbling in that peaceful isle where men in the long winter sewed and mended nets, and women worked in summer fields, toil and poverty tolerably evenly divided, but otherwise men were lords and lawgivers and women subject to them and to restrictions and prejudices, petty, deep-rooted, centuries old, and enjoyed no prerogative whatever, except that of maternity.

There were seventy children in the village. She saw them often in the schoolhouse where a lame man, ex-pilot and sailor, with large eyes and a long brown beard, taught them from the age of four to fourteen, and accompanied their songs with his fiddle. He had fallen, off the Chinese coast, from the mast to the deck and thence into the sea, been fished up apparently dead, lain months in a hospital,

finally with much privation reached his island home across the world, a broken man; gone to Berlin to furbish up his three R's; returned to teach the children of his village and to develop his taste for music and for oratory, for he could make a rousing speech.

Monica watched him often, limping about with his fiddle and teaching those towheads to sing, and she wondered that on that remote island and in that simplest of village-schools, all that they sung was poetry and music—never a cheap and tawdry thing. Their simple and quaint songs breathed in pure tones joy in nature, love of home and fatherland, and faith in God.

About a third of the lame fiddling ex-sailor's troop Monica taught daily on the beach, while the smallest, awestruck, crowded in the sand and watched these innovations. She was thankful for her queer task, thankful to the shy, delighted little maids, for the attention and energy they demanded. In spite of secret covenant, she grew miserably anxious about Arenberg.

Her day's work done, she was sitting in the sand before her door drying her hair in the sunlight and watching the slow waves creep up, pause as in doubt, and ebb. Always her

thought was Arenberg. In and out, through, above and beneath all things like the ether, this thought was subtly paramount. At the same time she saw the languid waves and the slow ships against the horizon, and meditated vaguely upon the course of events in her novel, and recalled Keith standing by a rock and with keen eyes looking seawards. Like Odin with his two ravens — birds of destiny — upon his shoulders, she sat motionless by the eternal sea, and sent the swift-winged flight of forethought and memory into the realms of the future and the past. All was still and soft near her. She heard no step, no sound, only far away, in the long curve of the shore, children's laughter from an old moored boat.

Suddenly, noiselessly, from behind, without warning, Arenberg came — stood — knelt — fell into her arms, and like a child clung to her silently and hid his face, and touched her cheek, her wrist, her hair, with infinitely caressing hand — seeking to prove she was no dream — yet thrilled and weak.

"Thank God, thank God. I feared I should never reach you before I died," at last he murmured, brokenly.

She, hardly surprised — being always all his

own — only clasped him close and closer — her lips on his hair, and crooned:

"Mein Herz! Mein liebes, süßes Herz!"

For many moments was no sound except the soft breaking of the waves, and the softer breaking of the tenderness of two full human hearts. But he yet lay very still.

"Dearest!" he said at length, faintly, yet looked up and smiled in her face. "I am an ill man, a dying man. Put me away somewhere. The trains were slow."

Three weeks he lay between life and death in her camp bed. A country doctor from a village ten miles away rode over three times every week to echo Arenberg's judgment. His symptoms evoked from him only professional interest. He explained to her coolly the exact shape, size, and functions of the heart human, what its inflammation meant, and how that organ in him looked, what radical changes it had undergone, what she was to expect. When he felt his own pulse, noted his own temperament and pain, prescribed medicine and treatment, he was as tranquil and correct as if called to inspect the swollen finger of a spoiled princess. But once he looked at Monica, and lifted piteous arms, and lay upon her breast and said:

"True heart, I am sad because I must go into the great darkness without you. With you, hand in hand, how gladly would I go!"

Helpless, agonized, broken all at once, she murmured:

"Love, take me with you. I cannot live on—without you."

But he, to comfort her, grew strong and smiled, laying frail hands in benediction on her sorrowful head:

"Sweetheart, tired heart, you will live on and be brave and glad. The time will come. And gladness helps the world."

Often, prostrate on the sands, she stretched herself in agony, in tenderness greater than her pain and implored all unknown powers, all good, all strength, cried in passionate prayer: "For him at any cost—whatever you may be—for him—whatever is good for him—life or death—even death if best for him."

So through the nights the danger wore along, while great winds blew and waves broke throbbing on the beach and sometimes rain-drops pattered on the roof in sweet insistent fall, and Monica still knelt by the narrow bed on which her love lay stricken, yet slowly, miraculously gaining strength, against the man-

dates of his own clear science. She, intense, perfect in care,—coolly scanning all signs—bating him in tenderness—drawing him with passionate, yet ever abnegating love back from the jaws of death, beheld life pause like the soft wave, as in doubt, yet flow back into strength.

“It is the magic of your breath, your touch, your kiss—your sweet, magnetic, health-giving presence. Life flows from your finger tips,” sighed he, incredulous.

The soft rain dripped and pattered on the low roof above their heads as he, after sweet light sleep, said this. In all after years the music of pattering rain-drops was plaintive, solemn, and sacred in her ears and sweet beyond anything on earth—except the wonderful waking of birds in the hush of early morning—and that symphony too she—once—heard with him.

Weak, but incomparably blessed, he lay in a hammock or among cushions on the sand, and heard the restful movement of the sea, and she was near. A few weeks he looked with kindly eye upon that folk, and made his quiet droll remarks, and told wise tales about any leaf or thistle or shell that his hand chanced to touch, and was simpler than the

simplest pilot, and those men too were strangely drawn to him. For all kinds and conditions he had sympathy—and winning, sincere ways. Feeble, suffering much, a doomed man, he was happy with a happiness surpassing his dearest dream. Such joy as their companionship may not be measured with mere words and divisions of time. In any hour they knew a lifetime, a world of loveliness.

It was long before Monica knew what directly beyond the rest had caused his illness. Joining fragments she perceived the whole. He, worn out, with as he said the mentality and physique of an aged cab horse, finally set forth on his vacation journey. At a station he happened to hear of cholera in a village near by. They said it was bad and the necessary medical attendance not yet there. According to Arenberg, he ran down from mere professional curiosity; besides, he had had earlier experience in a cholera epidemic.

The village was a god-forsaken place, beyond the railway. The contagion came straight down the little river from a place above. There was much to do. Everybody succumbed. The village doctor ran, parents left their children, two Sisters of Mercy were attacked. Through some unaccountable delay

of the government, help came slowly. The fact was, for some days he and a Catholic priest had almost the whole work, nurse, doctor and undertaker indeed. The priest was a capital fellow. Finally some nurses and a couple of doctors arrived, young fellows. Arenberg stayed merely long enough to run them into the grooves—about ten days in all. Then his heart, a poor machine at best, after repeated warning signals, gave out. The symptoms were distinct. He might have remained at a country inn or tried to go back to his home, or to the baths to die alone. He turned to Monica. The trains had no wings, and the pain was rather bad. He did not want to lie by like a lost hat-box in a way-station. It was all rather awkward—the connections and boats—but he came like a bird to its nest. Only not die till he reach her! The heart business was precarious—but that mattered little if only his strength lasted till he found her—and he willed that it should. So, dying, he came by unwinged plodding trains and stolid boats, to her—and love and life—a little while.

Upon the sands he said one day:

“Soon I must leave you, dear.”

She did not stir.

With gentle meditative interest — she felt that he was smiling as when he took some sea-moss in his hand — he remarked :

“ Since you have resurrected me, infused in me your own sweet life, I give myself — a few weeks — yes, a few weeks at the most — if things go their best — and upon that we must not count — but that much we may hope.”

She neither spoke nor stirred.

She knew he had a gift, half science and half second sight, and often foretold, with uncanny accuracy and at a glance, the length of men's lives — robust strangers passing in the streets. “ He has about six months, three years, or five,” he would say — and it came true.

Then, in the tenderest voice with which man ever spoke, calm, slow, and unearthly sweet, he murmured in her ear a wish, a simple very human wish — and children's laughter rang out from the old moored boat.

All within her wept for that which she must forego, the simple very human wish — which strong yet dormant until waked by his voice — lay deep in her heart's desire. All within her wept and shuddered as she beheld the fair face of that sweet, warm wish and saw it die and buried it.

Lifting her head, she smiled at him and trembled — but still smiled, looking long into his deep eyes.

“I have all the children that there are,” she whispered, and he drew her close and they were silent and — glad.

In mighty and restful rhythm the long waves washed the shore. Far off, great ships passed slowly — from unseen port to unseen port. Small white sails gleamed and red sails glowed, swift boats sped to north and south, and sea birds whirled, poised, darted, hovered, plunged into the waves and shining soared high in the sunlight, toward drifting clouds.

“They are not cruel, insensible or remote, the sea, and the winds and stars,” he said softly, looking with clear eyes far over the sea. “They only obey the same wise and good necessity as we. And he to whom they reveal their meaning, learns to bear suffering quietly — and undismayed. But how small it makes one!” he murmured, listening to the slow waves.

She rose a little, threw back her head, breathed deep, inhaling the breath of all nature, and looked off as if she beheld a throbbing vast procession of worlds, an immeasurable longing, birth, and growth, a vista

of infinite expanse — in unimagined, everlasting reaches.

“It makes me — *great*.”

“Ah, yes,” he returned, always comprehending her sudden ways. “That you too belong to it!”

In love, in silence — together close — like one thought, one heart beat — they contemplated the eternal ebb and flow of things and were at peace.

A little while they had together, and that is all the time there is in the longest life upon this beautiful, sad, glad earth — a little while.

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